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A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF DAUGHTERS' REPORTS OF SUPPORITVE AND UNSUPPORTIVE RESPONSES FROM THEIR MOTHERS DURING THE TRANSITION FROM COLLEGE TO CAREER

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by

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Abstract

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF DAUGHTERS' REPORTS OF SUPPORTIVE AND UNSUPPORTIVE RESPONSES FROM THEIR MOTHERS DURING THE TRANSITION FROM COLLEGE TO CAREER

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The transition from college to career has been established as a stressful period of time for emerging adults, as well as a critical turning point for mothers and daughters. Effective support from mothers helps daughters cope with stressful events, but shifting roles and/or expectations during periods of transition can present communication challenges. As such, the current dissertation investigated mother-daughter communication during daughters' transition from college to career. Framed by the lens of Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative model of social support, this study used face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with 35 emerging adult women to gain new insights into daughters' experiences transitioning and their evaluations of supportive/effective and unsupportive/ineffective messages from their mothers during this period of time.

The investigation uncovered a variety of stressors experienced by participants before graduation (unknowns, decision-making, finances, and outside expectations) as well as after (change in pace and social isolation). In regards to communication with mothers,

daughters reported a lack of satisfaction when mothers were overinvolved (challenging daughters' autonomy, being too forceful with ideas, asking too many questions) or under-attentive (not listening well, asking too few questions). According to daughters, this led to increased stress and tightened control of information on their part. Conversely, daughters appreciated when mothers believed in them and were positively engaged (encouraging daughters' autonomy, filling a cheerleading role, listening well, asking helpful questions). According to participants, this led to decreased stress, increased confidence, and a feeling of being anchored during the transition.

These findings contribute to an understanding of the stressors of the transition from college to career, as well as what types of communication daughters find more or less helpful. In accordance with Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative model of social support, daughters were most satisfied with behaviors and messages that attended to their task, identity, and relational goals.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Mothers and daughters share a unique and significant bond. The closeness (Lawton, Silverstein, & Bengston, 1994) and complexity (Miller-Day, 2004; Penington, 2004; Steinberg & Silk, 2002) that frequently characterizes this dyadic relationship plays an important role in a woman's life, across the life span (Fingerman, 1996) and, in particular, during times of change and transition (Bojczyk, Leham, McWey, Melson, & Kaufman, 2011; Eaton & Bradley, 2008). According to scholars, a daughter's journey into adulthood represents a critical period of change for the mother-daughter relationship as roles are renegotiated and communication is adapted in light of a daughter's growing independence (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Interestingly enough, our knowledge of mother-daughter communication during this time period is still somewhat limited (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006; Harrigan & Miller-Ott, 2013), but the current study helps to address some gaps.

For many daughters, one formal marker of the transition to adulthood is the move from college to career. Searching for and successfully obtaining a job is a necessary but oftentimes challenging undertaking for seniors graduating from college. Research has shown that emotional distress frequently accompanies the job hunt (Aronson, 2008; Haydon, 2015; Kenny & Sirin, 2006) but that the presence of social support can ease this distress and facilitate positive personal and job outcomes (Arnett, 2000; Galambos, Barker, & Krahn, 2006; Schulenberg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004; Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004). These same scholars have discovered that the absence of social support can serve as a hindrance to individuals' well-being and to the success of their job search. Relevant to the current study is the claim that mothers, in particular, appear to fill an

important support role during this time, helping emerging adults to make decisions and adapt more easily to change (Murphy, Blustein, Bohlig, & Platt, 2010). The transition from college to career is stressful for many emerging adults, and mothers can provide important help and support during this time. But, as will be discussed further, emerging adulthood is a period of growth and evolution and, as such, is bound to contain both intrapersonal and interpersonal changes and contradictions. There is much more to be learned about how daughters and mothers seek and communicate support during this time, and whether what we have come to expect of the support process is also applicable within this unique, complex transition.

In addition to providing information about the mother-daughter relationship and the transition to college, there are several other reasons why the current study is poised to make contributions to our existing knowledge. First, it has only been fairly recently that scholars have begun to examine the period of time we refer to as "emerging adulthood" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469), or the years between 18 and 25 when adolescents transition into fully-fledged adults (Arnett, 2007; Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca, & Ritchie, 2013). Economic shifts, including increased global competition, have impacted how graduates in this age range enter the work force (Bruckner & Mayer, 2004; Fullerton & Wallace, 2007). Due to recessionary changes, it is more common now than in previous eras for young adults to experience a "delayed transition" (Aronson, Callahan, & Davis, 2015, p. 1098); some travel, attend grad school, and/or take a variety of transitional jobs before officially settling down (Côté & Bynner, 2008; Furstenberg, Kennedy, McLoyd, Rumbaut, & Settersten, 2004; Shanahan, 2000). Due to this cultural shift, it is likely there are features we have yet to discover about communication during this developmental period. Secondly, as a result of feminist advancements and workforce evolutions, many mothers of today's college-aged

daughters have established careers themselves, and may have grown up watching their own mothers explore professions outside of the home (Barnett, 2004). Historically, this has not always been the case and may represent a relatively new phenomenon that could impact the nature of communication between mothers and daughters. Given the recency of this shift, it makes sense that we might not fully understand how mothers today – many of whom have workforce experience themselves and may have communicated with their own mothers about these issues – provide support to career-minded daughters. Finally, the current tone of the U.S. economy is such that young adults and families are likely to be experiencing higher levels of stress in relation to the transition from college to career. According to a 2014 report by the U.S. Department of Education, 8% of female graduates are still unemployed a year after receiving their Bachelor's degree. Additionally, according to a 2013 study by the U.S. Department of Education, graduating seniors are averaging a debt load of $25,000. The same report found that 27% of grads under the age of 24 are moving back in with their parents after graduation. Financial pressures and uncertainties like these may complicate communication between parents and children. Overall, the present study is pertinent, timely, and well positioned to diversify our existing base of knowledge on these subjects.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I will review literature indicating that (a) the mother-daughter relationship is one commonly (though not always) characterized by closeness and involvement; (b) in general, we can expect many daughters to seek support from mothers during stressful times; and (c) mothers' support attempts will be viewed as helpful if said measures take into account daughters' task/instrumental, identity, and relationship concerns/needs/dilemmas. It will also be shown that (d) during the transition

to adulthood (and, concurrently, the transition from college to career), daughters are seeking to establish their own identity as somewhat separate and independent from their mothers'; and (e) this transition causes the mother-daughter relationship to be in flux, as roles are renegotiated and patterns of interaction recalibrated. As such, the following questions are relevant: (1) What are emerging adult daughters' experiences transitioning from college to career? (2) How do daughters experience support from their mothers during this time? (3) How do daughters evaluate the helpfulness or unhelpfulness of their mothers' support provision? (4) How does this support purportedly affect daughters' stress levels and ability to cope with the job search process? In attempting to examine this unique and arguably complex experience – one which could potentially disrupt the normal support processes – a contribution of this study could include adding to scholars' understanding of how mothers and daughters can more aptly adjust to this and other transitions they will face over the course of their relationship, and how they can provide the most successful support for each other.

SUMMARY

The transition from college to career has been established as a stressful period of time for college seniors/young professionals, as well as a critical turning point for mothers and daughters. The current study seeks to understand this unique phase in an emerging adult college student's life, during which two key things are happening: (a) she is dealing with the challenging goals of finding a job and beginning a career – events which, for most people, involve opportunities for social support; and (b) she is also experiencing a shift in her relationship with her mother, a relationship which may be a key source of support and potentially central to her identity as a woman. Daughters need support during this time, but given that support needs can change based on context (Fisher, 2004), are their mothers able

to provide appropriate and helpful support given the fact that both parties are renegotiating and recalibrating their relationship (as this otherwise stressful transition is taking place)? It is with the concurrence of these two events, and the ways in which the support-giving process must also be adapted in order to be successful, that the current study is concerned.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter reviews literature relating to (a) the nature and significance of the mother-daughter relationship, (b) the role of certain transitions in the evolution and functioning of that relationship, and (c) the communicative processes of social support as highly relevant to (and fundamentally impacted by) the mother-daughter dyad's experience of said transitions. These areas of research provided the building blocks for the current study and, as it will be argued, point to the need for further investigation of these topics and phenomena. Finally, the current study's research questions will be presented.

THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

The following paragraphs highlight the significance of the mother-daughter relationship and outline the trajectory of existing research, detailing commonly utilized theoretical approaches and frequently-examined relational processes. This is followed by a discussion of communication-specific research into the topic.

Overview

The relationship between mother and daughter is considered, by some, to be one of the most influential relationships in a woman's life (Block, 1990; Golden, 2001; Jordan, 1993; Maushart, 1999; Miller-Day, 2004; Tannen, 2006), key to a daughter's development and identity formation (Bojczyk et al., 2011; Gordon, 1998) and characterized by [varying levels of] closeness, longevity, tension, and support (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Trees, 2000; Troll, 1987). Within the family system, the relationship is often seen as the closest and most intense, due to its potential to surpass other relationships in the areas of emotional connectedness and interdependence over the course of the life span (Fischer, 1991; Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006; Russell & Saebel, 1997; Steinberg & Silk, 2002). The mother-

daughter bond tends to grow and evolve over time, its roots based in shared experience and identity (Jonas & Nissenson, 1997). According to Jung and Kerenyi (1969), "Every mother contains her daughter within herself, and every daughter her mother" (p. 162). Mothers and daughters showcase high levels of involvement in each other's lives, communicating about things both momentous and mundane (Tannen, 2006) and "co-authoring" the other's life story (Miller-Day, 2004, p. 3). Daughters are heavily influenced by their mothers during their formative years, but the relationship often becomes more egalitarian as daughters enter and move into adulthood (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Many daughters may eventually find themselves as the primary caretaker of their aging mothers, bringing the relationship full circle. Despite some popular, idealized depictions, the valence of the mother-daughter tie is not exclusively positive, impacted by many factors inside and outside the dyad (Fingerman, 1996, 2000, 2001; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; Miller-Day, 2004). Additionally, mother-daughter dynamics can vary by culture and time period (O'Reilly, 2014). In sum, this relationship is nuanced and complex, full of opposing tensions and contradictions, some of which are explored below.

Scholarly Attention

Historically, there have been several key theoretical lenses through which scholars have examined the mother-daughter relationship, most notably the psychoanalytic, feminist, family systems, and life course perspectives. Additionally, researchers have explored a number of relational processes in respect to this dyad, as described below. Communication scholars have also spent time examining certain aspects of mother-daughter ties (e.g., relational dialectics, turning points, and memorable messages). Overall, an abundance of research on the topic positions the mother-daughter relationship as a rich setting for observing complex communication processes (Kellas, 2010b).

Commonly Utilized Theoretical Lenses

Research examining the nature and dynamics of the mother-daughter relationship has originated in multiple disciplines and has utilized several key theoretical viewpoints.

Psychoanalytic Approach

Some scholars who have studied mother-daughter ties have done so from a psychoanalytic perspective. One of the earliest pioneers of the psychoanalytic approach to the study of mothers and daughters was Freud (1917), who wrote that children tend to identify, first and foremost, with their same-sex parent. Out of his ideas flowed the view that, while sons are encouraged to differentiate themselves from their mothers as a means of establishing their identity, daughters are socialized to remain highly connected to their mothers (Chodorow, 1978), a phenomenon which Freud and some others have viewed as detrimental to women. As it relates to the transition from adolescence to adulthood, young women are more likely to establish a norm of interdependence, rather than independence – simultaneously managing similarity to, and yet separateness from, their mothers. While Freud's views on this subject have been contested (in part, by the feminist perspective, discussed next), the psychoanalytic approach provides commentary on the disproportionate level of caregiving responsibilities that fall on women, the socialization of girls into nurturing roles and behaviors, and the reasons women are often more skilled at relational communication than men (Feingold, 1994; Tolman, Diekmann, & McCartney, 1989).

Feminist Approach

The feminist perspective on mother-daughter relationships was, in large part, born out of the psychoanalytic tradition as a means of revising and improving upon it. This approach views the connection between mothers and daughters more positively; instead of

dismissing mother-daughter affiliation as a hindrance to individuals' identity development, a balance of connection and separateness – self and [m]other – is seen as healthy and adaptive (Baltes & Silverberg, 1994). Feminist scholars (Chase & Rogers, 2001; Flax, 1978) embrace the idea that the mother-daughter relationship shapes the identities of both women (Chodorow, 1994). And, overall, the feminist perspective asks scholars and practitioners to reject patriarchal, gendered assumptions which would suggest a lifelong, competitive struggle between mothers and daughters, favoring instead the view that transition in the relationship is the act of "two people seeking alternative ways to bond at different stages" (Walters, Carter, Papp, & Silverstein, 1988, p. 49). Daughters' transition to adulthood represents just such a period, where daughters are exploring their individual identities and asking their mothers to connect with them (and support them) in different, more mature, peer-like ways (Domene, Socholotiuk, & Young, 2011). From a feminist perspective, mothers play a key, socializing role in their daughters' attitudes toward gender and, by extension, work. For example, mothers' cultivation of their daughters' "feminist identity" relates to higher levels of career aspiration (Colaner & Rittenour, 2015, p. 356).

Family Systems Approach

Other scholars interested in mothers and daughters have examined the relationship through a family systems lens. According to family systems theory (Bowen, 1976), the family unit is considered an intricate structure of interconnected, mutually-influential parts (including the parent-child relationship[s], sibling relationship[s], and marital relationship). In this view, parents influence children but children also have an impact on parents. When changes or disruptions occur, the system is shaken up, per se, and must find a new balance (Bowen, 1976). The mother-daughter dyad is considered by some to be the closest of all within the family system (Jonas & Nissenson, 1998). Patterns of family

interaction established during a daughter's childhood years may continue to influence her during her transition to adulthood, affecting the ways in which she claims her own individual identity (Fingerman & Berman, 2000; Himsel, 2005). Conversely, her emergence into adulthood can bring changes to her relationship with her mother as well as potential disruptions to the family system – disruptions to which the mother and family must adapt (Lachman & James, 1997). From a family systems perspective, the college-to-career transition is likely to be heavily influenced by the existing norms of the larger family system (Fingerman & Bermann, 2000). For example, in some family networks, loyalty and family member care are highly valued; whereas in others, independence and individual achievement are the focus. Families may elevate certain members in importance, emphasize and/or ignore individual characteristics, and obligate members to provide differing levels of assistance to the family (Fingerman & Berman, 2000). Therefore, these elements are likely to affect how mothers and daughters approach daughters' transition to adulthood, shaping expectations and communication.

Another aspect of the family systems perspective is that mothers' influence on daughters (and granddaughters) is long-term. According to Charles, Frank, Jacobson, and Grossman (2001), mothers' interactions with their own mothers have a strong influence on how they handle issues with their daughters. Most specifically, subjects' memories of their own process of separating from their mothers were related to how they viewed and responded to their daughters' attempts at individuation; when mothers remembered their own mothers as having encouraged or enabled their autonomy, they were more likely to do the same for their daughters (Charles et al., 2001).

Life Course Approach

Finally, certain researchers (including some communication researchers) prefer to examine mother-daughter processes from a lifespan or life course perspective. According to Elder (1998), one of the first to advocate for the use of this lens, human beings' lives are ever-changing and dynamic. These changes serve to plot the trajectory of individuals' lives and, in relationships, these trajectories become intertwined (Hutchison, 2007). For families, including mothers and daughters, events and life changes experienced by one generation can affect the other (Elder, 1994). This interdependence is well established; research has shown that parents and adult children continue to be involved and interconnected throughout the duration of their lives (Hareven, 1977, 1996, 2000), providing various types of [more or less effective] support to each other over the years (Schwarz, Trommsdorff, Albert, & Mayer, 2005; Schwarz, Trommsdorff, Kim, & Park, 2006).

Within the life course literature, research has trended towards two main areas: (a) mothers' parenting and its effects on daughters' childhood and adolescent development (Boyd, 1989; Chodorow, 1974; Thompson & Walker, 1984); and (b) the relationship between mothers and adult daughters during mothers' old age, when daughters are likely to be fulfilling some version of a caregiving role (Allen & Walker, 1992; Silverstein, Conroy, Wang, Guiarrusso, & Bengston, 2002; Walker & Pratt, 1991). Thus far, fewer studies have explored mother-daughter communication during emerging adulthood, a period of time during which daughters in their 20's are "explor[ing] a variety of possible life directions in love, work, and worldviews" (Arnett, 2000, p. 469). This is slowly changing as more researchers begin to examine this phase of the lifespan (Donovan, Thompson, LeFebvre, & Tollison, 2017), thereby adding to our understanding of the

significance and dynamics of mother-daughter communication during daughters' entrance into adulthood (Harrigan & Miller-Ott, 2013; Rittenour & Colaner, 2012). According to Fingerman (2000), as daughters enter adulthood, they may become less dependent on their mothers and less in need of their mothers' nurturance. However, during the transition from college to career, daughters are likely to be dealing with a great deal of uncertainty and stress which, in many cases, could cause them to reach out to their mothers for advice and support. These competing themes lend themselves to the current examination which aims to add to this small but growing body of literature examining mother-daughter communication during emerging adulthood.

Summary

What these research perspectives have in common is their recognition of the mother-daughter relationship as an interconnected, nuanced, lifelong bond – a bond that, for better or for worse, is developmentally significant for both daughters and mothers over the course of their lives (Bojczyk et al., 2011). The current study builds on these collective views and pulls, in small measure, from each perspective. Mothers and especially daughters are negotiating issues of dependence, independence, and interdependence during this period of emerging adulthood, which connects to the ideas of the psychoanalytic and feminist perspectives. Additionally, daughters are navigating questions of location and proximity during their transition (e.g., applying for jobs near the family or pursuing career options farther away); in accordance with family systems theory, previous family patterns and norms may influence these decisions. Finally, the current study relates to the life course perspective in its examination of daughters' transition out of college as an early but pivotal period during which the mother-daughter relationship begins to shift in its balance, potentially prompting changes in mothers' and daughters' communication and support

patterns. Building on each of these perspectives, this study extends our knowledge of the ways in which emerging adult daughters are helped or hindered by mothers' attempts at support during a time when daughters' identities are changing and the mother-daughter bond is in flux.

Commonly Examined Events and Processes

The multidisciplinary study of mother-daughter relationships has tended to utilize several main theoretical frameworks while also concentrating on a handful of events and relational processes faced by mothers and daughters. The following paragraphs represent a brief review of topics previously studied by mother-daughter scholars.

Some scholars have examined the development of daughters' self-concept and their identification with their mothers. Hollender (1973), for example, found a positive relationship between daughters' identification with their mothers and their own self-concept and self-esteem. Acock and Yang (1984) found that daughters identified firstly and most profoundly with their mothers, and secondarily with their fathers; the study also showed that daughters from intact families who identified strongly with their mothers had a stronger identification with their fathers, supporting the idea of the family as a complex, interrelated system.

Other scholars have examined sex role behaviors and attitudes. For example, Smith and Self (1980) found that mothers' attitudes toward sex roles (specifically whether they hold to a more contemporary or traditional approach) are predictive of their daughters' thoughts on the subject, particularly when the mothers were well-educated (greater attitudinal similarity between well-educated mothers and well-educated daughters). Attitudes towards sex (Newcomer & Udry, 1984), and even the experience of loneliness

(Lobdell & Pearlman, 1986), have also been shown to be correlated between mothers and daughters.

Some scholarship has focused on work and employment. Research has shown that mothers' attitudes and behaviors relating to work were influential in their daughters' lives; when mothers supported the idea of work outside the home, and especially when they worked outside the home themselves, daughters were more likely to feel and do the same (Macke & Morgan, 1978; Rollins & White, 1982). Similarly, in regards to occupational mobility and attainment, mothers' professional choices and trajectory were predictive of daughters'; whether mothers chose to work inside or outside the home – and, if the latter, how much success they achieved in the workforce – influenced daughters' choices and levels of attainment (and this influence exceeded that of fathers) (Pearson, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1978; Stevens & Boyd, 1980).

While regular contact and practical forms of aid are key constructs within the mother-daughter relationship, researchers have published mixed findings regarding its connection to emotional intimacy. Walker and Thompson (1983) found no relationship between aid and intimacy, while in another study they did see a positive association between reciprocity of aid and attachment (Thompson & Walker, 1984). Employment status was shown to impact how much aid and what kinds of aid daughters provided to their mothers: Lang and Brody (1983) found that working daughters provided less aid than nonworking daughters; Horowitz, Sherman, and Durmaskin (1983) found that working daughters were more willing/able to give financial help, whereas nonworking daughters were more likely to provide household assistance.

Mothers and daughters often experience tension and conflict in their relationship (Fingerman, 1996). Some of this tension stems from daughters' struggle to understand who

they are in relation to themselves and her mothers: "…a daughter can't simply will herself to be unlike her mother. She will identify with her mother on some level and the struggle to deny it can be lifelong" (Rivers, Barnett, & Baruch, 1979, p. 78). Similarly, according to Fox (1979), "intimacy and irritation go hand-in-hand" (p. 21) and even warm, loving mother-daughter relationships have been found to contain tension and conflict. Daughters tend to perceive more conflict in the relationship than do mothers, which could be related to daughters being the ones who are in the process of individuating themselves from their mothers (Boyd, 1989).

While the aims of this study do not directly relate to issues of self-concept, sex role behaviors, and attitudes toward work and employment, these issues serve as a natural backdrop to the narratives of the women interviewed, influencing their transitions and filtering through their descriptions. In regards to the aforementioned tensions present in mother-daughter relationships, emerging adulthood is a period of time when mothers and daughters may be exploring issues of sameness and separateness (Rivers et al., 1979) in more recognizable ways, as this study explores.

Communication-Specific Investigations

Research on mother-daughter relationships in the field of communication has focused on such issues as relational dialectics and turning points in the life of the relationship, among other communication dynamics. Below, several lines of research will be highlighted as a means of presenting a picture of the current state of interpersonal communication research on mother-daughter relationships.

Relational Dialectics

Relationships are full of contradictions, and mother-daughter relationships are no exception (Bojczyk et al., 2011; Fischer, 1986). In light of these inherent complexities, a few communication scholars (e.g., Harrigan & Miller-Ott, 2013; Miller-Day, 2004; Penington, 2004) interested in mother-daughter ties have chosen to utilize dialectical theory or relational dialectics (Baxter, 2011; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998) as a lens through which to examine the dyad. According to relational dialectics, there exist core tensions (opposing desires/needs) within any relationship. The tensions include integration-separation (being connected versus being autonomous), stability-change (balancing the expected and the unexpected), and expression-nonexpression (exhibiting openness versus closedness). This lens is illustrative, in part, because it reflects the opposing forces that are often at work between mothers and daughters, particularly in stages during which daughters are attempting to create their own identity separate from that of their mothers' (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Two dialectical tensions that are especially relevant to the mother-daughter relationship are those of openness-closedness and stability-change (Baxter, 2011; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). Whereas daughters are generally fairly open with their mothers about certain topics (Raffaelli & Green, 2003), they can also be prone to withholding information, especially when desiring to avoid threatening the relational expectations in some way or when attempting to protect the other person (Miller-Day, 2004; Vangelisti, 1994). This particular tension is useful in understanding changes that may take place in the flow of communication during periods of transition. As relationships evolve (in response to the evolving lives of daughters), the transmission of information may change to reflect that. According to Fisher and Miller-Day (2006), "managing openness and closedness [is] a process of adjusting to the daughter

as an autonomous adult while maintaining relational intimacy" (p. 10). For mothers and daughters, balancing the tension between privacy and disclosure becomes especially relevant during transitions when the relationship is in flux and both parties are attempting to find a new balance. Additionally, in regards to the aims of the current study, the tension of integration-separation is useful in helping to examine mothers' and daughters' negotiation of daughters' emerging adult identity.

In relationships, partners are continuously attempting to find a balance between stability and change, between what is familiar and unfamiliar (Baxter, 2011; Montgomery & Baxter, 1998). While some elements of the mother-daughter relationship stay quite constant over time, other features change and evolve throughout the course of the lifespan. As Fingerman (2001) asserted, as daughters grow into adulthood, the roles of both parties become increasingly ambiguous (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). According to research by Miller-Day (2004), when mothers or daughters resist the natural processes of change, the relationship tends to suffer and experience more intense growing pains. On the other hand, if daughters' newly developing autonomy is embraced, and efforts at intimacy continue, the change can actually bring about increased closeness, as mothers and daughters grow to view and relate to each other in more peer-like ways (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006).

Turning Points

Other communication scholars examining the mother-daughter relationship have chosen to utilize the concept of turning points (Baxter, 2004), or "transformative events that in some way change relationships" (Breshears, 2010, p. 80). Turning points in the mother-daughter relationship commonly include changes in physical or emotional distance due to relocation (Golish, 2000), as well as daughters' marriage (Miller-Rassulo, 1992) and pregnancy/childbirth (Miller-Day, 2004). According to Miller-Day (2004) and Nydegger

(1991), another important turning point occurs when daughters begin to see their mothers as unique individuals and even peers, rather than mere parental figures (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006; Miller-Day, 2004). Other turning points in the relationship can occur if mothers or daughters positively or negatively violate each other's expectations (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006), or if mothers or daughters gain or lose a romantic partner through divorce or remarriage (Fisher, 2004; Golish, 2000). Finally, a very pivotal turning point, which normally happens later in life, involves the moment at which some daughters assume the role of caretaker for their aging or ill mothers (Fingerman, 2001).

Increasingly, scholars are pointing to the importance of daughters' transition to adulthood as a significant turning point in the relationship (Fisher, 2004). Mothers reported a key turning point occurring when they noticed their daughters truly growing and maturing, gaining a sense of self, and becoming less dependent on them (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Relatedly, daughters reported a meaningful turning point taking place when they perceived their mothers had begun treating them like adults. As such, the current study is strategically situated within a body of literature that acknowledges the power of life transitions in impacting the communication (and support) patterns of mothers and daughters. Mothers and daughters are in uncharted territory during this time and the current study is positioned to expand our knowledge of what communication behaviors constitute successful or unsuccessful navigation of this period. By engaging in an in-depth exploration of daughters' evaluations of their mothers' supportive communication patterns during the college-to-career transition, the study is poised to contribute to our understanding of a complex and relationally-charged transition.

Additional Considerations

Although relational dialectics and turning points represent key portions of the communication research on mother-daughter relationships, scholars have also looked at a variety of other issues. For example, Miller-Day (2004) found two different forms of closeness and relating in the mother-daughter dyads she studied. Some pairs were "connected," meaning they were involved in each other's lives but still operated independently. Connected pairs communicated in open and direct ways, with less judgement and defensiveness overall. On the other hand, "enmeshed" pairs were very close, highly demanding of each other (most often demonstrated by mothers), and with very few boundaries between them. Within the latter type, change was perceived as a threat and daughters worked hard to meet their mothers' high expectations. Instead of negotiating separate but connected identities, enmeshed daughters showcased much more deference towards their mothers and relational satisfaction was lower (Miller-Day, 2004).

In other areas of communication scholarship, some researchers have studied narrative sense-making in the mother-daughter relationship (Horstman, 2012; Horstman et al., 2016; Kellas, 2010a, 2010b), while still others have focused on discourse and meaning-making (Harrigan & Miller-Ott, 2013). For example, Horstman and colleagues (2016) found that when mothers and daughters jointly narrated stories about daughters' difficult times, coherence between the stories and the action of perspective-taking was related to heightened positivity on the part of daughters towards the events in question. Kellas (2010b) established that memorable messages from mothers about romantic relationships influenced daughters' relationship worldviews; for instance, if mothers frequently told daughters to value themselves in relationships, daughters were more likely to adopt an independent rather than a traditional relational worldview. Finally, Harrigan and Miller-

Ott (2013) found that adult daughters talked most frequently about friendship, parenthood, and independence when discussing times they felt closest to their mothers, whereas talk of containment, impropriety, and separation was the most salient when alluding to periods of distance.

Health communication has received a good deal of attention as it regards mother-daughter interactions: Jones, Denham and Springston (2007), Yun, Silk, Bowman, Neuberger, and Atkin (2009), Browne and Chan (2012), and Silk et al. (2014) have all examined mother-daughter communication about breast cancer risk. Communication-specific studies have also explored mother-daughter communication about healthy eating patterns (Hamel, 2015; Prescott & Le Poire, 2002) and about sex (Askelson, Campo, & Smith, 2012; Coffelt, 2010). Finally, individual scholars have studied how mothers and daughters discuss dependency (daughters caring for mothers in old age) prior to this actually taking place (Pecchioni & Nussbaum, 2000), how mothers and daughters deal with the occurrence of breast cancer (Fisher, 2010), and how mother-daughter dyads communicate about HPV (Krieger, Kam, Katz, & Roberto, 2011). While health-related conversations are not the focus of this study, mothers and daughters in the current context are navigating issues of dependence/independence (as is the case later in life, though roles are reversed). Additionally, some elements of the transition may arise as sensitive or difficult subjects for mothers and daughters, meaning research into mothers-daughter discussions of health-related taboo topics (like disordered eating or sex) could provide valuable parallels.

Summary

The literature reviewed here helps to ground our current understanding of communication in the mother-daughter relationship. Mothers and daughters routinely

contend with dialectical tensions in their relationships. They are affected by key life turning points which can change the nature of their relationship dynamic and communicative interactions (daughters' transition to adulthood being one of those). Mother-daughter pairs co-create their own unique versions of closeness and functioning, not all of which are positive in nature. Memorable messages from mothers can affect daughters, in a variety of areas, well into adulthood. Mothers and daughters often make sense of their experiences through dialogue and storytelling. Overall, mother-daughter relationships are complex and nuanced, including positive and negative elements. According to Kellas (2010b), "An abundance of research positions the mother-daughter relationship as central to understanding relational transmissions through communication" (p. 4). Given the centrality of this relationship within the family system (Williams & Nussbaum, 2001), and the multitude of complex communicative processes that take place between mothers and daughters, the continued study of this unique dyad has the potential to teach us a great deal about the relationship specifically, but also about communication in general. The current study is positioned to address questions that are yet unanswered as it regards these areas of study.

TRANSITION AND CHANGE IN THE MOTHER-DAUGHTER RELATIONSHIP

The following sections explore transition and change as key forces affecting the mother-daughter dynamic. Notable transitions will be discussed, followed by an exploration of one particularly influential change (that of daughters' entry into adulthood) and the transition from college to career that takes place within that period.

Overview

The archetypal mother-daughter relationship can be viewed as having a life cycle of sorts, which typically includes the birth of the daughter, the daughter's adolescence and emergence into adulthood, the daughter's marriage and entry into motherhood, the mother's aging (sometimes accompanied by health issues), and finally the passing of the mother (Fischer, 1981). Though this pattern is not universal and does not present itself in that exact order for all mother-daughter dyads, it represents a series of relatable stages and transitions. These events bring change – not just to the individual mother or daughter, but also to the dyad, which must readjust and recalibrate itself in light of transitions like these (Fisher, 2004; Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006).

Significant Transitions across the Lifespan

A good deal of multidisciplinary research has focused on the transitions that occur within the mother-daughter relationship. One of the first and most nuanced transitions faced by the mother-daughter dyad is daughters' shift from adolescence to adulthood (Fingerman, 2001). During this period, roles may become less clear as daughters are negotiating new, independent identities and mothers choose how they will respond and adjust to this change (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Another type of transition mothers and daughters face is a change in proximity (Fischer, 1981; Golish, 2000); early on, this may happen as daughters move away to college or relocate to begin their careers. Daughters' marriage (Miller-Rassulo, 1992) and pregnancy/childbirth (Miller-Day, 2004) represent two very significant transitions for this dyad – transitions which can create a unique new bond between mothers and daughters (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). Additionally, for daughters, becoming mothers themselves can help them view their mothers with new eyes, more fully appreciating mothers' choices and sacrifices (Miller-Day, 2004; Nydegger,

1991). The final, significant transition for mothers and daughters takes place when mothers grow old and daughters must assume the role of caretaker (Fingerman, 2001). To a certain degree, there is a feeling of role reversal when this occurs (Bromberg, 1983, 1987). Other transitions may include mothers' or daughters' divorce or remarriage (Fisher, 2004).

Overall, daughters have reported that their relationship with their mothers improved over time (Baruch & Barnett, 1983; Fischer, 1981) and that they experienced greater empathy towards their mothers as time passed. This shift in thinking and relationship satisfaction can stem from time, experience, and adjustment to change.

Transition to Adulthood

"A daughter's transition to adulthood, in particular, seems to be a defining moment in a mother-child relationship. This provides an opportunity for daughters to develop a personal, increasingly egalitarian female friendship bond with their mother" (Miller-Day, Fisher, & Stube, 2013, p. 7). Transitions play a pivotal role in the evolution of the mother-daughter relationship, particularly as it regards the life transitions of emerging adult daughters, which initiate shifts in the overall relationship dynamic. While Freud (1917, 1923) asserted that daughters must separate from their mothers in order to achieve full development, since then scholars have argued that women's development is based in remaining emotionally connected to mothers while also creating their own independent personal identity (Jordan, 1993; Mens-Verhulst, Schreurs, & Woertman, 1993). The developmental period during which these issues are most salient is women's emergence into adulthood, ages 18-25 (Arnett, 2007), during which young women "come into their own" and renegotiate who they are as independent people with their own identities, interests, and life goals. During this same time, many daughters find themselves entering the work force, falling in love, cohabitating or getting married, and becoming mothers

(Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). It is during this transition from adolescence to adulthood that the mother-daughter relationship is recalibrated (and even intensified), transforming from a dyad characterized by dependency into a long-term, increasingly equal source of [more or less effective] support for both mothers and daughters (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006).

Changes in proximity represent a turning point in the mother-daughter relationship. During the transition from college to career, mothers and daughters are communicating in the midst of change (which can impact the effectiveness of support if one or both parties are unable to adapt). But they are also communicating about potential changes (such as moving away for a job or moving back home for a job) – changes which would further affect the relationship. As complex as it is to continue to communicate effectively in the midst of a relational shift, the complexity is compounded by the nature of relevant conversations as [topically] rooted in anticipated change (for example, a seemingly innocuous conversation about job placement could lead to a difficult discussion about impending physical distance). To some degree, daughters are never fully done differentiating themselves from their mothers – this is a lifelong process, balancing connection and differentiation (Baxter, 2011; Miller-Day, 2004) – but it begins in a more formal sense while daughters are transitioning into adulthood, as in the current context.

Transition from College to Career

A critical life transition for many emerging adults (ages 18-25) is the move from college to career (Arnett, 2000; Holton, 2001; Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Polach, 2004; Schulengerg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004; Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004). Searching for and successfully securing a job is a customary but oftentimes challenging undertaking for graduating seniors, many of whom have little practice searching for full-time work (Yang & Gysbers, 2007). Additionally, young adults leaving college are

grappling with dramatic changes in schedule and circumstance, while also facing a shift in identity and the introduction of new expectations and responsibilities given their new status as independent adults.

Over the years, scholars have examined this particular life transition from a variety of angles. One such angle is that of career search efficacy, or the confidence one has in his or her ability to effectively perform various job searching tasks (Solberg, Good, Fischer, Brown, & Nord, 1995). Time and again, research has shown a direct relationship between career search efficacy and positive job search outcomes (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001; Solberg et al., 1995).

Another such angle is that of career adaptability (Super & Kidd, 1979; Super & Knasel, 1981), or one's "readiness to cope with the predictable tasks of preparing for and participating in the work role and with the unpredictable adjustments prompted by changes in work and working conditions" (Savickas, 1997, pg. 254). According to Savickas (1997), the construct is comprised of four smaller concepts, namely exploration, planning, decision-making, and problem solving. Some scholars have attempted to understand how various intrapersonal factors relate to adaptability, examining individual characteristics like self-esteem (van Vianen, Klehe, Koen, & Dries, 2012), self-control (Duffy, 2010), optimism (Murphy et al., 2010), and resilience (Bimrose & Hearne, 2012). But others have taken a more interpersonal approach (Blustein, Juntunen, & Worthington, 2000), examining the concept of social support, or the instrumental and emotional resources individuals draw from while attempting to succeed in their career (Han & Rojewski, 2015). Findings indicate that social support positively influences adaptability by helping individuals to make better career decisions (Kracke, 2002) and more fully understand their own occupational identity (Lent, Hackett, & Brown, 1999). Stress and change often go

hand-in-hand, but if emerging adult daughters are receiving the social support they want and need, it could be inferred that they would showcase greater career adaptability and – in turn – perhaps experience lowered stress levels.

In sum, research has shown that emotional distress frequently accompanies the job hunt (Kenny & Sirin, 2006) and that this distress is negatively associated with career search outcomes (Yang & Gysbers, 2007). Additionally, studies have indicated that the presence or absence of social support can facilitate and hinder both the job search and the job adjustment process (Arnett, 2000; Galambos et al., 2006; Schulengerg, Bryant, & O'Malley, 2004; Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004). Mothers, in particular, appear to fill an important support role during this time, helping emerging adults to make decisions and adapt more easily to change (Murphy et al., 2010).

Mothers' Involvement

A robust body of research has shown that mothers play a key role in students' successful transition from college into the work force. Both Nauta and Kokaly (2001) and Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, and Glasscock (2001) found that mothers had a greater influence than fathers in their children's initial career development. In regards to career self-efficacy, researchers have shown that (a) approval and recognition from mothers (Lin, 2004); (b) strength of relationship with mothers (O'Brien, 1996; O'Brien, Friedman, Tipton, & Linn, 2000); (c) positive communication with mothers (Mao, Hsu, & Fang, 2012); and (d) attachment to mothers (O'Brien, et al., 2000) all related to increased levels of career self-efficacy on the part of female students. Daughters with a strong emotional connection to their mothers also reported more confidence in dealing with future career challenges (Blustein, Prezioso, & Schultheiss, 1995; O'Brien, 1996; O'Brien et al., 2000; Ryan, Solberg, & Brown, 1996). Subjects have reported that their mothers played a very

important role in the formation of their work ethic by modeling flexible, adaptive career behaviors (Kenny, Blustein, Chaves, Grossman, & Gallagher, 2003). Additionally, mothers and other family members were viewed as helpful and supportive when they offered "unconditional support" of an individual's school and work decisions, accepting whatever choice was made without pressure or critique (Murphy et al., 2010, p. 179). Finally, mothers' involvement has been shown to lead to greater career maturity (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002).

The work of these scholars provides support for the idea that mothers play a critical role in students' success as they tackle the challenges of the job market. The stressful nature of this transition, and the established presence of mothers in this context, lends credence to the idea that daughters will be turning to mothers during this time. However, given that this transition coincides with daughters' emergence as fully-fledged adults, it is valuable to examine how daughters view and evaluate their mothers' communication in light of their growing desire for independence.

Summary

Research has predominantly focused on mother-daughter interactions during daughters' adolescence and mothers' elderly years, but scholars have called for additional research into the intervening period during which many important life events can occur. Scholars argue that these critical life events and changes play an important role in shaping the mother-daughter relationship (while also being influenced by the mother-daughter relationship) and, as such, we should examine these moments more carefully. To reiterate, scholars believe that one particularly relevant (yet understudied) transition is a daughter's entrance into adulthood, during which her identity is changing and her relationship with her mother is likely to evolve and perhaps even intensify. The transition from college to

career coincides with women's transition to adulthood and therefore provides an avenue by which to heed scholars' encouragement to further examine this context. To date, no studies have examined mother-daughter support processes during daughters' transition from college to career.

THE COMMUNICATION OF SOCIAL SUPPORT

The following pages discuss the multidisciplinary study of social support, followed by a narrowed review of the supportive communication perspective and Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative model of social support, which has informed the current investigation.

Overview

It was in the mid-1970's that the modern view and study of social support began to emerge. Scholars like Moss (1973), Caplan (1974, 1976), Cobb (1974, 1976), and Cassel (1976) were highly instrumental in this, publishing books and papers at this time which sought to define, articulate, and explore support as a meaningful part of interaction and a determinant of an individual's broader quality of life. From these original writings, there emerged three distinct approaches to the study of social support, these being the sociological perspective, the psychological perspective, and the communication perspective (MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011). Although these perspectives address different facets of social support, the overarching purpose of the research is to understand the connection between social support and well-being.

Sociological Perspective

As one might imagine, the sociological tradition is dominated by sociologists but, over the years, many (non-communication) health researchers have also ascribed to this view of support, namely that social support can be understood and measured as belongingness to various groups and overall degree of integration within a social network. Scholars in this vein have attempted to assess the nature and extent of individuals' networks. They may do so by (a) counting the number of groups individuals are a part of and/or how many close relationships they maintain; (b) examining how often individuals engage with groups or people; and/or (c) assessing how much individuals feel like they belong within these groups (for a review, see Ikeda & Kawachi, 2010).

The sociological tradition is known for the methodological strength of its studies, which are often very large, sometimes longitudinal, and are good at controlling for various potentially compounding variables. One study that is frequently cited as an exemplar of this perspective is Berkman and Syme's (1979) longitudinal examination of the connection between integration in a social network and lowered morbidity. Over nine years, while controlling for many variables, they were able to demonstrate a clear connection between integration and mortality rates. Many studies since then have also shown, through use of strong methodological means, this type of relationship, firmly establishing the idea that social support and health/well-being are connected (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Uchino, 2004).

Theoretical explorations in this tradition have centered on whether social support has a "buffering effect" in stressful situations, or a "main effect" in all situations, regardless of the presence or absence of upsetting circumstances. Cohen and Wills (1985) wrote on this topic and found that both ideas hold some validity, depending on the ways in which

social support is measured. In several different publications, Rook (1984, 1987) explored the question of whether social relationships are always good (in terms of adding benefits) or whether they can also be detrimental to health, depending on the nature and quality of the relationship. Finally, scholars in the sociological tradition have continued to look for the explanatory mechanisms between social support and health, examining issues such as how close relationships provide motivation and/or encouragement to be healthy.

Psychological Perspective

While the sociological perspective explains social support as integration in a network of groups and relationships, the psychological approach focuses instead on the internal processes of individuals, specifically how they perceive the support that is available to them, should they need it, and how good or adequate that support would be, if it were required. While this is the prevailing focus of the approach now, the emphasis on perceptions of support became increasingly prominent as other ideas were tested and found lacking. For instance, early researchers in this tradition (Barrera, 1986, and others) thought the key was enacted support, support or assistance that is tangibly given in the midst of a crisis. But, when these researchers found that enacted support was hard to isolate and test, they then turned to the idea of received support. This was easier to measure through use of self-report scales given to those who had been on the receiving end of supportive acts. Unfortunately, the initial findings of studies looking at received support were not strong, forcing researchers to continue looking for other answers, which eventually led them to the now popular idea that perceived support (i.e., one's assessment that help will come in time of need), is a strong predictor of health and wellness. Studies of enacted and received support examine what has already happened, whereas examinations of perceived support focus on what individuals believe will happen in the future.

Lazarus' (1991) idea of appraisals comes into play here because, theoretically, if individuals perceive help as being readily available, they may appraise stressful events as less hopeless, which may help mitigate their stress and prevent some of the negative health effects of stress. Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) also continues to be given a good deal of attention within the study of social support in the psychological perspective because scholars like Sarason and Sarason (1986) have been able to show that the perception of available help stays fairly stable over time, similar to one's working model of attachment as related to experiences during infancy. They and others have documented correlations between perceptions of support and attachment style.

Like the sociological tradition, the psychological tradition is very strong, having produced a great deal of scholarship, examined a wide range of subjects/situations, and provided strong evidence of the connection between social support and various health and wellness outcomes. Through the explorations of both of these traditions (as well as the communication tradition), we know that being interpersonally connected to others, being integrated in social structures, and believing that there are people in your life who care enough to provide good and sufficient help are all elements which do produce positive results in both physical health and psychological health. However, there are complexities that continue to be explored, particularly what types of things mediate or moderate these effects. The study of social support is very extensive and is likely to continue to be an important subtopic in multiple social science disciplines, including communication.

Communication Perspective

Whereas the sociological perspective focuses on social integration and the psychological tradition scrutinizes perceptions of support, the communication perspective examines social support as communicative behavior. The current study is interested in the

interactive, relational processes of support and, as such, the communication perspective is the most relevant and appropriate lens through which to examine mother-daughter support. The goal of this project was not to examine daughters' global perceptions of support, or the strength of their networks, but rather the ways in which daughters and mothers enact support seeking and support provision, and the perceived effect this communication has on the larger transition in question.

The study of supportive communication is the study of messages (both verbal and nonverbal) that are produced and exchanged as a means to providing help and assistance to others who are perceived as needing support (Burleson, Albrecht, & Sarason, 1994). Communication is absolutely central and fundamental to this perspective. Scholars in this vein are focused on the behaviors that are enacted in the help-giving and help-receiving process. Support is communication and, as such, communication is what links support and wellness (Burleson et al., 1994; MacGeorge et al., 2011). Not only does the communication perspective examine what behaviors serve to provide and receive support, and their quantities and frequencies, but it also values the quality of the support that is given (Burleson, 2003b; MacGeorge, Feng, & Thompson, 2008). Within the other perspectives, the implication has often been that more support is better, (Rini & Dunkel-Schetter, 2010; Vaux, 1990) but the communication perspective asserts that not all support is created equal and that certain types of support are better than others at achieving the goal of helping (Goldsmith, 2004). The perspective is concerned with the health benefits afforded by supportive communication, as I will discuss next, but it is also concerned with other types of benefits, specifically relational benefits of support (Burleson, 2003a, 2003b; Burleson & Denton, 1997; Xu & Burleson, 2004).

As is true in all approaches to the study of social support, many supportive communication articles focus on the relationship between support and physical health. As can be seen in the health communication literature, it is a chief concern of researchers to understand the role of communication in producing various health-related outcomes – most broadly, improved health and well-being (Thompson, Robinson, & Brashers, 2011). Much of the research into health and communication has focused on areas such as patient satisfaction with communication/care, uncertainty management, health-related disclosures, patient participation in care, effects of nonverbal behavior between patient and provider, control over care, communication skills necessary for positive doctor/patient interaction, and finally the nature of discussions about end-of-life issues (for a full review see Thompson et al., 2011). More relevant to this study would be the work that has been done on the importance of family in relation to health. Within families, individuals develop a socialized, subjective understanding of what is healthy or unhealthy and/or what topics are open or taboo (Ormondroyd et al., 2008). The ways in which families communicate about health influences family member attitudes (Parrot, 2009) which can relate directly to physical and mental well-being (Pecchioni, Thompson, & Anderson, 2006). For example, in the context of the current study, if daughters are experiencing high levels of stress due to the job search process but their mothers have never encouraged (or perhaps actively discourage) the idea of professional therapeutic treatment, the nature of this communication could have a direct impact on their stress management and mental health. Mother-daughter relationships can be filled with dialectical tensions and contradictions (perhaps even more so as daughters reach adulthood), meaning conversations about job search stress would presumably be impacted by these complexities (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006).

In addition to the aforementioned areas of scholarship relating to health and communication, another interesting area of research involves how individuals choose where to seek support, specifically which networks they turn to for help during times of stress and why. The process of seeking support and receiving helpful support when coping with difficulty is a nuanced and complex process (Albrecht & Goldsmith, 2003; Burleson & Goldsmith, 1998; Goldsmith, 2004; La Gaipa, 1990). In the current context, mothers are faced with the challenge of providing support that attends to daughters' multidimensional support needs. But, previous to this, daughters are tasked with weighing and deciding from whom they should seek support in light of their need to successfully cope with the stressors being faced, while also taking into account their image and the nature of the relationship in question. One area of research in this vein is that of strong tie/weak tie support preference (Adelman, Parks, & Ablrecht, 1987; Granovetter, 1973, 1979, 1982, 1983; Walther & Boyd, 2002; Wright & Bell, 2003); in other words, when faced with a health crisis or stressful situation, would individuals rather seek support from those closest to them, or from others who may be more tangentially involved? Multiple scholars have found that sometimes it is more difficult to seek support from one's strong tie network (Albrecht, Burleson, & Goldsmith, 1994; Barbee, Rowatt, & Cunningham, 1998; Brashers, Neidig, & Goldsmith, 2004; Pakenham, 1998) due to considerations such as the fear of being judged or the feeling that the potential support source lacks experience with that particular problem. This presents an interesting dilemma relating to the current study. We know that mothers and daughters tend to be highly involved (Youniss & Smollar, 1985), engaging in communication about a variety of subjects, sensitive and otherwise (Guerrero & Afifi, 1995), so we might expect that daughters would be quick to approach their mothers about their job search process. However, it could be argued that daughters would be more likely

to approach other sources if they feel mothers would not have expertise in the subject, or if they worry mothers would be judgmental, resistant, patronizing, or controlling. Daughters may prefer to discuss their stress and practical concerns with others in the same situation, or perhaps may wish to avoid worrying mothers who are concerned about daughters' job prospects. Though often applied to health crises, the idea of strong tie/weak tie support seeking brings interesting questions to the current study. It is presumed that many daughters will still choose to seek support from their mothers; in these cases, what led them to this decision, and what forms of support would encourage or discourage them from going to mothers again?

Another important and unique aspect of supportive communication research is the focus on the messages themselves – messages produced as a means of eliciting support from others and messages produced as a means of providing support to others. Research on the latter issue has often focused on the idea of comforting messages, messages that are produced for the purpose of making someone feel better, decreasing their distress, and/or helping them process through the problem. Burleson and Applegate began talking about the person-centeredness of comforting messages in the 1980's. Person-centeredness relates to how closely tailored a message is to the person and situation in question. Highly person-centered messages acknowledge and place value on the feelings of the target of the message, making a point to help the person fully process through the nuances of the issue. Several studies by Jones (2004, 2005) have shown that highly person-centered messages are the most effective at achieving the intended purpose of helping another. Moderately person-centered messages can also be helpful, but frequently take on the form of sympathy, distraction, or reframing. Low person-centered messages are not helpful and, in general, act to challenge one's feelings, rather than validate them.

Advice and esteem support (targeted at making someone feel better about themselves) are also studied within this tradition as frequently-seen examples of interpersonal support. Well-established ideas about politeness and facework (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Metts & Cupach, 2008) are often discussed in this context because threats to positive and negative face can serve to reduce the qualitative value of the advice and, in turn, the outcome. Both the style and content of the advice messages are of interest to researchers and, according to advice response theory (Feng & MacGeorge, 2010), are of even greater importance than the characteristics of the source of the advice. Overall, there is evidence that the best kind of advice is delivered in a pressure-free way and in a manner that shows value and respect for the subject. The life transition in question is particularly interesting because, thus far, daughters have been somewhat dependent upon mothers. But, in light of daughters' emerging independence, there is a new tension (most likely felt by both mothers and daughters) between care and separation. What do mothers do to attend, simultaneously, to daughters' continued dependence and burgeoning independence? Further, as it regards advice response theory, how do daughters evaluate and react to mothers' advice during a period of time in which they need information and support but also desire to establish their own independent identity? At the current time, no one has explored how these processes work as the current study aims to do.

Over the last one to two decades, scholars – in particular, communication scholars – have begun looking more closely at social support as an interactive process, an exchange of messages (often within the context of an established relationship) aimed at alleviating distress. Key to these examinations is the question of how and why support providers communicate in the way(s) that they do and if, how, and why support recipients benefit from it. This type of support is commonly referred to as enacted support (or in some cases

received support, though I will continue to utilize the former term in the current discussion), meaning the supportive actions and interactions and the things people do and say as a means of helping each other (discussed in greater depth below).

Enacted Support

The concept of enacted support is multidimensional in nature, taking on various forms in the way that it is provided. According to Cutrona and Suhr (1994), types of enacted support include emotional support (expressions of caring, concern, empathy, and the reassurance of worth), informational support (information, advice, or new perspectives on a problem), tangible support (offers of goods and services), appraisal support (providing new perspectives relevant to self-concept or the situation), esteem support (giving reassurances of worth), and network support (opportunities for socializing or belonging to a group).

Enacted support originated, as a concept, from within the psychological perspective on social support. However, Goldsmith (2004) argued that enacted support should be understood as fundamentally interactive and communicative, based in relationships and conversation, and inextricable from the exchange and interpretation of messages. She wrote that in order to understand the connection between enacted support and positive coping outcomes, the concept ought to be reconceived in the following manner.

Enacted Support as Communication: Goldsmith's Normative Approach

In line with this view of enacted support as a communicative process, and in attempting to extrapolate the connection between enacted support and its effect on coping (or its ability to be a stress-buffer), Goldsmith (2001, 2004) has developed the normative model of social support. This is a theoretical lens which attempts to "derive some baseline

predictions about the types of behaviors support recipients are most likely to judge as positive under various conditions" (pg. 25). In short, Goldsmith's theory sees communication as strategically formulated in response to multiple goals. Communication is deemed successful and/or satisfying by a receiver when their goals and needs have been attended to within the message. In other words, "some conversations are more satisfying and successful than others because some ways of communicating do a better job of accomplishing the task while also managing what talk means for identities and relationships" (Goldsmith, Lindholm, & Bute, 2006, p. 2080). Furthermore, "a normative theoretical perspective is a particular multiple goals approach that addresses questions about the variable means of communicative practices within particular social contexts, the constraints individuals face in accomplishing their goals as well as the discursive resources available for managing those constraints, and the criteria by which people evaluate communication" (Scott, Martin, Stone, & Brashers, 2011, p. 395).

Goldsmith's model examines the process of (a) an individual attempting to provide support in the context of a conversation; (b) the [personal, subjective, culturally-influenced] evaluation of that support by the support recipient; (c) the success of the support in helping the recipient cope with the stressors; and (d) improved overall well-being due to improved coping. While these steps are not meant to imply causality, they do provide a clearer link between enacted support and well-being, which had previously been supported inconsistently. Goldsmith's methods for testing and applying this model include examining conversational features that were reported to be successful. The current study aims to examine daughters' part in this exchange, specifically how they evaluate behaviors and conversational features intended to provide support, and how successful support influences their coping and well-being in this context.

Enacted Support as Rhetorical in Nature

Goldsmith (2004) has applied a rhetorical lens to her study of supportive communication. In other words, she draws on the processes of rhetorical inquiry in examining the intended purposes and outcomes of supportive messages, namely as it regards the assumption that (a) there are multiple goals at play when individuals attempt to provide support; (b) support messages can be well constructed or poorly constructed and, as such, more or less successful in achieving their intended goals; and (c) the dynamic and bi-directional relationship between the situation (as influencing the communication) and the communication that is exchanged (as influencing the situation). The current study is positioned to explore these elements. Mothers may be more or less aware of their own goals and their daughters' goals in the support process. They also may be more or less skilled at constructing messages that attend to daughters' conflicting needs in this context (for example, the need for support and perhaps advice, contrasted with the need to be treated as independent, competent adults). This study aims to further understand these considerations in this unique context, lending support to Goldsmith's model while also extending its applications.

A key facet of the rhetorical perspective of support is that individuals engaging in interaction are aware of (and act in response to) various relational dynamics and goals (Daly & Wiemann, 1994; Tracy, 1991). The solicitation and provision of support is not the only concern, but rather there are three primary factors/purposes relevant to the support giving process: task concerns, identity concerns, and relational concerns (Clark & Delia, 1979; Dillard, 1990; Donovan-Kicken & Caughlin, 2010; Goldsmith, 2004; O'Keefe, 1988). Communication is seen to be successful if it effectively attends to the task features

of the interaction, while also upholding (and not violating) relevant identity and relational elements.

As it relates to troubles talk, a common focus of Goldsmith's work, task considerations would relate to individuals' desire to help their relational partners cope and problem-solve during times of difficulty. Identity considerations would be connected to individuals' roles, their right to make decisions, their unique gifts, and/or innate value and worth. Finally, relational considerations would relate to interactants' norms and expectations in relating to each other (relationship type, power differences, similarity or dissimilarity). As relevant to the current study, task considerations could involve daughters' need for information or practical advice relating to the job search or job acclimation process. Identity concerns, on the other hand, might involve daughters' desire for mothers to affirm their autonomy in both symbolic and practical ways – encouraging and trusting their decision-making, or perhaps refraining from advice that feels overly controlling. Finally, relational goals could include daughters' need to feel that their mothers care about the details of the transition and about how they are coping with the job search process. Notably, at times in the support giving process, these elements may compete with each other, requiring strategy and sophistication in successfully providing support while attending to the various considerations mentioned. According to Goldsmith (2004), there are multiple ways to achieve one's purpose, but "different ways of carrying out the same task (i.e., coping assistance) may be better or worse at adapting to these multiple purposes as they arise in particular situations" (pg. 47). Goldsmith advises that we move beyond simply counting the frequency of certain types of support and into the realm of further understanding how support can be constructed to attend to multiple, complex purposes.

In addition to there being multiple purposes to be satisfied when providing support, it must be acknowledged that certain message features might be well suited to accomplishing these purposes, while others are not. According to O'Keefe and McCornack (1987), messages involve multiple complex features, including what is said, and how and when it is said. However, in order to understand and forecast the functionality of support, we must recognize the connotations of support in its various forms and blends. For example, if a daughter calls her mother to get feedback about the kinds of positions for which she might apply, a mother could respond in a way that provides concrete ideas but, in the process, calls into question her daughter's potential in a certain area (e.g., "I hear there are a lot of jobs in HR right now! In fact, you might reach out to my friend Sue to see if there is anything like that available at her company. I just don't think you're wired for a career in sales – I think you might have a hard time with that role."). Or, perhaps a daughter reaches out to her mother to talk through feelings of failure she is experiencing after several job search disappointments, hoping her mother will simply listen and empathize; instead her mother questions her performance in her recent interviews and then launches into a lecture about the common mistakes applicants make. In situations such as these, because they are complex, features of mothers' support behaviors may serve to uphold some, but not all, of the three main concerns (task, identity, and relational).

Finally, a rhetorical approach to support necessitates the acknowledgment that the situation shapes communication, but that communication can also shape the situation. According to Goldsmith (2004), "A rhetorical approach to the study of enacted support emphasizes how the situation can shape and constrain what is likely to be effective, but also recognizes the ways in which language shapes and constrains how we see a situation and what we see as relevant within a situation" (pg. 50). The current study is concerned

with features of support that daughters evaluate as helpful/successful – including specific things mothers say or do which attend to daughters' task, identity, and relational concerns – as well as how the transition from college to career impacts the support process in conceivably unique ways. Rather than attempt to capture real-time conversations between mothers and daughters, the current study focused on daughters' retrospective accounts of these interactions – a method which is not unprecedented in tests of Goldsmith's model. For example, Goldsmith et al. (2006) studied the dilemmas that can arise (between multiple goals) in conversations about a cardiac event; rather than asking dyads to discuss the cardiac event in the context of the study, researchers interviewed individuals about previous interactions relating to this topic. Additionally, Edwards, Donovan, and Reis (2014) examined parent-child communication about HIV by talking to parents living with HIV about how they have managed competing goals in previous, difficult conversations with their children about this topic. These studies, and others like them, help to provide direction for the methods employed in the current study, which will be detailed in the next chapter. Despite limitations, participants' retrospective accounts of communication events can still be utilized as a worthwhile means of further understanding successful features of talk and support (Baxter, 2011; Benoit & Benoit, 1988, 1990).

Giving support is not a simple process, but rather requires sophisticated assessments and actions on the part of the support giver, along with key evaluations and responses from the receiver. Multiple purposes and complex contexts are at play, and support that is improperly tailored to the receiver is unlikely to be evaluated as helpful (in the short term or the long term). Further examination of how these complex processes are uniquely showcased between mothers and daughters during daughters' transition from college to career is believe to be warranted.

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Mothers and daughters inhabit a unique space, jointly constructing their own version of closeness and functioning. This is an ongoing (even lifelong) process which can result in both positive and negative outcomes for the dyad as well as for individual parties. The ways in which mother-daughter pairs handle dialectical tensions, turning points, memorable messages, role expectations, and support seeking and provision have implications for both women in the relationship. As evidenced in the aforementioned literature, transitions play an important role in the mother-daughter relationship across the lifespan. Issues of dependence, independence, and interdependence are relevant at various key points (emerging adulthood, when daughters have children, when mothers begin to age, etc.). Depending on how mothers and daughters communicate during these periods, such tensions can have positive and/or negative impacts on the relationship. We know that the mother-daughter relationship can be an important source of connection and support for both women. Far from being a simple process, successful support seeking and provision necessarily involve sophisticated, multi-layered communication exchanges, where both parties evaluate and respond to the apparent needs and goals at play. Within the current context, daughters are likely to label certain support attempts from their mothers as more successful and satisfying when mothers' support attempts attend to daughters' task, identity, and relationship goals. This is established in the literature, but what is not known is how daughters' needs are changing due to this particular context and whether mothers are able to respond to these nuances in ways that meet daughters where they are. As Fisher (2004) has previously argued, context is key. The context of this study involves a unique transition and shift in the mother-daughter relationship. As such, even normal/previous methods of communication may no longer be effective, given the role shift that is taking

place. According to Goldsmith et al. (2006), "To understand when and how communication between relational partners can facilitate a desired outcome, we must examine not just the frequency of talk, but also what is said, how it is said, and the means participants typically attribute to particular ways of saying things. Some conversations are especially challenging because the purpose of talking threatens valued identities and relational qualities, thus creating new dilemmas" (p. 2080). Daughters are dealing with a stressful task, desiring treatment as adults, and also conceivably desiring involvement with mothers. "All communication entails task, identity, and relational meanings, but the particular tasks, identities, and relational qualities that matter are specific to various social contexts" (Goldsmith et al., 2006, p. 2081). As such, the question remains, what are the unique task, identity, and relational qualities that are salient to daughters experiencing this transition? And how do mothers respond to these changes in ways that are helpful or unhelpful, as reported by daughters?

In light of the relevant literature and the aims of the current study, the following specific research questions were explored:

RQ1: What are the stressors faced by emerging adult daughters transitioning from college to career?

RQ2: What themes characterize emerging adult daughters' experiences of support from their mothers during the transition from college to career?

RQ3: What features of support communicated from mothers to daughters are perceived as helpful or unhelpful during this time?

RQ4: How do emerging adult daughters' experiences with supportive communication from their mothers relate to their ability to cope with stressors present during the transition from college to career?

Chapter 3: Methods

The current study employed a qualitative, phenomenological approach to its examination of daughters' experience of mothers' support during their transition from college to career. Study findings were derived from 35 in-depth interviews with emerging adult daughters. The following sections describe the study's research design and reasoning, participants and recruitment, procedures for data collection and analysis, and measurements of trustworthiness.

Research Design

Within the constructivist/interpretive tradition, the relativity of truth, rather than its objectivity, is privileged (Kvale, 1995). Specifically, "objectivism implies that an objective reality exists independently of the observer and that only one correct view can be taken of it" whereas "relativism involves a view that all concepts of knowledge, truth, reality, and goodness are relative to a specific theoretical framework, form of life, or culture" (Kvale, 1995, p. 23). Qualitative researchers seek an understanding of reality that is "socially and societally embedded" (Grbich, 2007, p. 8), based on "the way people interpret and make sense of their experiences in the worlds in which they live, and how the contexts and situations and the placement of these within wider social environments have impact[s] on constructed understandings" (p. 8). The current study assumes a view of truth wherein multiple truths can exist which may not be able to be understood quantitatively. Through careful iterative, thematic analysis, qualitative researchers seek patterns of meaning, interpretation, and understanding from a range of individuals who experience a particular phenomenon (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This inductive approach to research provides a pathway for attempting to understand participants' socially constructed realities.

In the case of the current study, in order to analyze daughters' experience of supportive communication (and its effects) during the transition from college to career, I – as the researcher – used in-depth interviews to help gain a more phenomenological understanding of these individuals' perceptions of their situation. Qualitative interviewing takes the form of a guided conversation (Kvale, 1996; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) in which researchers are able to elicit thick descriptions of a given phenomenon in order to analyze this information for themes and patterns (Warren, 2001). Kvale (1996) compares a qualitative interview to a journey; "the interviewer wanders along with the [participants], asks questions that lead subjects to tell their own stories of the lived world, and converses with them in the original Latin meaning of *conversation* as 'wandering together with'" (p. 4). This open-ended design allows the researcher to be fully "attuned to who is being traveled with… [rather] than setting out a precise route for all to follow, as in survey research" (Warren, 2001, p. 5). The present study utilized interviews, rather than surveys or other forms of data collection, to be able to have the freedom to explore subjects' stories in more depth.

Several other reasons also informed this choice: First, this method of data collection "allow[s] researchers to ask about communication events too time-consuming or too private to observe" (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1992, p. 285). Because researchers cannot easily observe or record conversations between mothers and daughters as they happen in real time, interviews provide a space in which participants in said conversations can reflect on those interactions and offer their own interpretation of the events and communication processes at work.

Second, interviews conducted according to the phenomenological tradition help to uncover the essence of one's lived experiences (Creswell, 2007; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002;

Van Manen, 1990) and allow for the unpacking of communicative exchanges and social interactions (Rossetto, 2015). In-depth interviews provide space for depth and detail in participants' reports (Patton, 2002a), which can provide researchers with clear, evocative descriptions of a given phenomenon, thereby helping us to understand it more vividly and/or more fully (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Patton, 2002b). In the case of this study, I examined how daughters evaluate their mothers' support attempts and how these attempts influence the navigation of the transition process. In-depth interviews provided an opportunity to inquire about the full range of interactions and internal thoughts that led participants to their current view of their situation. In line with common prescriptions for qualitative research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), throughout the entirety of the research process, I engaged in iterative, comparative analysis – exploring subjects' responses inductively and generating themes from the data, which reflected the research objectives of the study (and the results of which are described in Chapter 4 of this dissertation). According to Srivastava and Hopwood (2009), "The role of iteration, not as a repetitive mechanical task but as a deeply reflexive process, is key to sparking insight and developing meaning. Reflexive iteration is at the heart of visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understanding" (p. 77).

PARTICIPANTS AND RECRUITMENT

Participants

All participants in the current study were emerging adult daughters ($N = 35$) in the process of transitioning from college to career. According to Arnett (2007) and Schwartz et al. (2013), emerging adulthood takes place between the ages of 18 and 25. Due to the

complexities of dependence and independence which daughters are negotiating during this time, only young women in the aforementioned age range were sampled. Participants' ages ranged from 20 to 23 (M = 21.8, SD = 0.84). Twenty-seven women were White/Caucasian (77.1%), four were Hispanic/Latina (11.4%), three were Black/African-American (8.6%), and one self-identified as Middle Eastern (2.9%). Thirty-four women (97.1%) recorded their marital status as single, while one participant (2.9%) had been married a few months prior to her interview.

To increase specificity and focus, women who were within one year of graduating or within one year of having graduated were the target of the current investigation; in other words, the study focused on a two-year time span from senior year of college to one year out of college. This unique range was chosen due to the high likelihood that daughters would be actively seeking jobs, or would be dealing with other transition-to-career related stresses, and would therefore (presumably) have experience seeking and/or receiving support from their mothers as a means of helping with the stress of this life phase. Twenty-one women (60%) were in their final year of college (within 12 months of graduating), while the other fourteen participants (40%) had previously graduated and begun their career pursuits. Of the graduates, all were employed at the time of their interview: ten (28.6%) were employed in full-time professional capacities, one (2.9%) held a part-time position, and three (8.6%) were gainfully engaged in academic settings as graduate assistants. Of those still in school, two (5.7%) had a post-grad job in place, fifteen (42.9%) were still on the job market, and four (11.4%) were in the process of applying to graduate school in addition to applying for jobs. Across all participants, nine universities were represented, including six public institutions (66.7%) and three private institutions (33.3%)

– five located in the Southwest (55.6%), three in the Midwest (33.3%), and one in the Southeast (11.1%) region of the country.

In order to be a part of the study, participants needed to have a living mother (or mother-figure) with whom they were on speaking terms. According to daughters' reports, mothers' ages ranged from 37 to 61 (M = 51.3, SD = 5.13), and their ethnicities included twenty-seven White/Caucasian (77.1%), five Hispanic/Latina (14.3%), two Black/African-American (5.7%), and one Middle Eastern (2.9%). According to daughters, thirty-one mothers (88.6%) were currently married; of those married, five (14.3%) had been previously divorced. An additional four mothers (11.4%) were reported as currently single: three (8.6%) of which had been divorced and one (2.9%) never married. As reported by daughters, eight mothers (22.9%) had only one child, sixteen mothers (45.7%) had two children, eight mothers (22.9%) had three children, and three mothers (8.6%) had four children; children ranged in age from 4 to 37. In regards to educational background, according to daughters' reports, seven mothers had a GED or high school diploma (20%), three had some college credit (8.6%), four had Associate's degrees (11.4%), twelve had Bachelor's degrees (34.3%), and seven had graduate degrees such as a Master's or Juris Doctorate (20%). At the time of interviews, thirty of the participants' mothers were employed outside the home (85.7%).

Recruitment

After obtaining Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A), participants were recruited through use of convenience and snowball sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Recruitment techniques and materials targeted female undergraduate students in their senior year of college, as well as recent female graduates who were in their first year of work, post-college. In seeking participants, a variety of means were utilized,

including flyers posted on campus, university email listservs, announcements in class (communicated by colleagues and faculty members at other universities), and social media posts to departmental accounts (followed primarily by students and alumni) as well as personal accounts (seeking referrals). Furthermore, snowball sampling was relied upon to help recruit others; at the close of each interview, participants were offered digital recruitment materials to distribute to friends who might fit the study's criteria and be interested in participating. In regards to study compensation, each participant received a $15 gift card to Target, as well as an opportunity to win a drawing for an additional $100 Target gift card.

Number of Interviews Conducted

Saturation of relevant themes was used as the litmus test for meeting the appropriate number of participants (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As detailed in the study's audit trail, it was determined that recruitment and data collection were at a point of completion when, even upon continuing to sample participants, (a) no new information or "epiphanies" (Denzin, 1989, p. 33) were being produced; and (b) the emerging themes had been developed and explored in appropriate depth. While the initial goal of the study was to sample 30-40 women in total, the ultimate aim was to accumulate a substantive group of cases from which to draw meaningful claims about the experience of transitioning from college to career. In line with this, Patton (2002b) argued that, within the realm of qualitative inquiry, no definitive rules exist relating to sample size; but rather, investigators should seek the appropriate number of cases to be able to explore the subject matter thoroughly, to the point where no new themes are emerging (Bute, 2007). In the case of the current study, recurrent themes arose very early on in data collection and, while arguably I could have halted interviews sooner

than I did – due to saturation of themes – I wanted to make sure that sufficient depth of explanation from participants had been reached. In sum, a total of 35 interviews were conducted and analyzed for the purpose of this study.

DATA COLLECTION

Interview Procedures

After being contacted by potential participants, I confirmed a date, time, and location for each interview. The interviews ranged from 25 to 72 minutes, for approximately 1775 total minutes of active interviewing. The average interview lasted 50 minutes, not including the time it took participants to fill out the IRB consent forms and demographic survey. Nineteen interviews took place in person, while the other sixteen were conducted using video conference technology such as Skype or Google Hangouts. In-person interviews were conducted at a location of participants' choosing, such as the library, local Starbucks, or my campus office. Throughout the process, an important consideration was whether or not the difference in communication channel (face to face vs. video) was impacting the interviews at all. Overall, there was no evidence that the results or depth of description varied between those speaking to me in person or via videoconference.

At the start of each interview, the IRB consent form (see Appendix B) was reviewed, and participants were asked to complete a short demographic survey (see Appendix C) which included items such as name, age, gender, university major and classification, and city and state of residence. Due to the nature of the current examination, participants were also asked to provide their mothers' name, age, education, occupation, marital status, number/sex/age of children, and city and state of residence. Participants

were notified that they could leave any questions blank, should they be uncomfortable or not want to answer. Additionally, participants were informed that at any point during the interview, they could choose to skip questions or end the interview altogether (although no one did).

At the close of the interview, there was a brief time during which the participants and I conversed casually. Some participants asked questions about the study, and feedback was provided on the helpful nature of the interviewee's comments. Participants were thanked for their involvement and the interview was officially concluded. In a few instances early on, I conducted 2-3 interviews in one day; however, I noticed that I was quite exhausted after several consecutive interviews. In light of this, as data collection progressed, I made sure to schedule only one interview per day. This allowed me to be highly energized and attuned to participants.

In regards to the exact type of interviews being conducted, within the realm of qualitative research, three main forms of interviewing are utilized: highly structured, moderately/semi-structured, and unstructured (Frey et al., 1992). The current study employed semi-structured interviews, which means that a broad set of questions guided the overall flow of the interview, but – within that – I was free to ask spontaneous, probing questions based on participants' responses. The aim of these further probes was to "deepen the response to a question, to increase the richness and depth of responses, and give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired" (Patton, 2002, p. 372). While I, as the researcher, guided the conversation and utilized prompts to elicit examples and personal anecdotes, each participant was able to discuss pertinent topics freely and without hindrance or interruption. In utilizing this semi-structured interview style, it allowed for the women in the study to uniquely interpret and explore the questions. For instance, some

women told lengthy, in-depth stories, while others strung together multiple relevant anecdotes. Some focused on events and logistical details, while others highlighted emotional components. Some talked at length about certain topics and briefly about others. While the result of each interview was the participant sharing her experiences and perspective with me, individuals' styles varied in doing so. Together, we were able to focus on the elements of their transition and support experience that were most salient and meaningful to them. Doing so provided a chance to elicit meaningful, thoughtful, in-depths accounts.

Interview Guide

The guide for the interview (see Appendix D) included a series of open-ended questions that moved from broad and general to more targeted and specific. The questions were designed to investigate issues relating to daughters' transition experiences, their communication with mothers, helpful and unhelpful features of support from mothers, and the effects of all of this on daughters' transitions. Within the interview guide, the full sequence of questions directly mapped onto the study's original research questions, but I was also able to ask probing questions to further understand subjects' unique experiences. For instance, throughout the interviews, participants were asked to provide examples of specific messages they had received and evaluated, which allowed for greater and more nuanced depth of exploration within the study. Additionally, as is key to the iterative research process (Berkowitz, 1997; Bruce, 2007; Harper, 2003; Mauthner, 2003; Patton, 1980, 2002a; Srivastava & Hopwood, 2009; Tracy, 2012), as themes emerged, I was able to tweak the questions in the interview (or explore certain elements further) to be able to flesh out these emerging constructs. For instance, the interview guide did not (initially) include direct questions about advice. But, as I realized that this was relevant to the women

being interviewed, I started taking more time to ask specifics about their advice seeking/receiving experiences with their mothers. Additionally, it became clear that topic avoidance was more central to the subjects' narrative than originally anticipated; in light of this, I began to ask more probing questions about this topic as I moved through the course of the interviews. Overall, the interview guide served as an important framework for these conversations, but – in line with semi-structured interview practice (Patton, 2002), I was able to adjust follow-up questions in response to participants' unique comments.

Recording and Transcription

Per IRB approval and participants' consent, all interviews were audio recorded from start to finish using a digital recording device. To protect subjects' privacy, a pseudonym was assigned to each participant, which became the file name for each audio clip. Audio files were transferred to a computer and later transcribed verbatim by a local transcription service which I hired and paid for myself. In total, 474 single-spaced pages of transcription were generated (M = 13.5 pages per participant). Per recommendations by Braun and Clark (2006), upon receiving each of the finished transcripts, I re-listened to the audio recordings of each interview while reading along to ensure accuracy of the transcriptions. Overall, very few changes were made. Furthermore, this double-checking process, which took place as the transcripts were received (and therefore concurrently with new interviews being conducted), allowed for a continuous, iterative analysis of the data. Field notes from each interview, combined with a review of the audio and transcripts, were an important part of the discovery and exploration of themes (Tracy, 2012).

My Role as Interviewer

According to Bourke (2014), "research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants" (p. 1). As such, the unique identity of each party has the capacity to influence the data gathering process (England, 1994). In undertaking and documenting procedures of scientific inquiry, it is necessary and worthwhile for qualitative researchers to acknowledge and scrutinize their own positionality within – and as influencing – their interviews with participants. These considerations are a form of "continuing self-analysis" (Callaway, 1992, p. 33) known as reflexivity (Chiseri-Strater, 1996; Pillow, 2003). In the next few paragraphs, I will address my stance toward the researcher-participant relationship, as well as my personal characteristics in context with those of the participants.

One specific strategy as an interviewer is to attempt to remain detached, neutral, and therefore presumably objective; this is a prescription representing traditional positivist attitudes, the aim of which is to reduce the presence of bias (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Oakley 1981). A vastly different, highly naturalist approach advocates for heightened levels of involvement and information exchange between researcher and participant; this positions both parties as equal co-participants and encourages the cultivation of friendship, with the goal being to avoid the power imbalances conceivably fostered by the positivist interview model (Finch, 1984; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1983). In each of these modes of interviewing, an idealistic objective exists: either the avoidance of bias or the avoidance of hierarchy. But some argue that both alternatives are unrealistic (Cotterill, 1992; Stanley, 1984) and, instead, we should strive to inhabit the space where objectivity and subjectivity meet (Bourke, 2014; Freire, 2000).

As such, my own approach fell somewhere in the middle, in line with the ideas of feminist researcher Pamela Cotterill (1992) who suggests taking on the role of "friendly stranger" (p. 596). In assuming this stance, I as the interviewer sought to build rapport with participants without engaging in personal disclosures or reciprocity (Oakley, 1981) unless directly solicited. Even when probed, a friendly stranger is inclined to keep their responses somewhat general. For example, at least one participant asked about my own relationship with my mother; in response, I answered truthfully without including any specific personal details. In striking this balance between warmth and distance, you are allowing your subjects to remain free from any relational obligation to you. "The 'friendly stranger' unlike a friend, does not exercise [social] control over respondents because the relationship exists for the purpose of the research and is terminated when the interviews are complete" (Cotterill, 1992, p. 596). Cotterill (1992) asserts that "respondents might find it easier to talk to the researcher precisely because of her status as a stranger rather than a friend or acquaintance" (p. 596). Concurrently, Ribbens (1989) suggested that some may appreciate the uncommon opportunity "to do what is normally seen as an indulgence and socially reprehensible: to talk about oneself at length" (p. 584). Both of these ideas were echoed in comments from participants. One young woman (Crystal) said she enjoyed discussing these topics, as they were not normally ones she broached with friends. Another woman (Selena) commented that it felt good to be able to talk and process without feeling guilty for monopolizing the conversation.

In sum, taking on the role of friendly stranger allowed me to prioritize subjects' responses and focus on exploring their experiences rather than highlighting my own. The vast majority of participants were previously unknown to me, allowing me to easily assume this role. However, in a few cases, participants were former students, meaning I had some

previous knowledge of them, albeit limited to a professional, teacher-student context (i.e., I had no pre-existing knowledge of any one participant's relationship with their mother). Nonetheless, in order to enhance rigor, I reviewed these recordings and compared them to other examples (in which I had not known the participant). Overall, my manner across interviews remained consistent, both in the ways I related to participants and how I framed (or followed-up) questions. Similarly, post-analysis, I carefully checked any claims made about this small handful of transcripts, in order to ensure I was not over-interpreting any statements based on previous knowledge of the student. Having reviewed this, I feel confident that analysis of these interviews is sound (and could be replicated by another scholar examining the data). This conclusion was aided by the following: (a) as mentioned, I came into these interviews with little to no knowledge of any one participant's personal relationships, even those few I had formerly taught; and (b) as I progressed through the coding of the de-identified data, my focus was less on recalling the source and more on understanding the statements themselves. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge this positionality even if it did not appear to affect the results.

According to Merriam et al., (2001), "Positionality is determined by where one stands in relation to 'the other'" (p. 411). As such, it is valuable to reflect upon my own identity and characteristics in relation to those of participants. One thing to note is that I am a female researcher who interviewed exclusively female subjects. Some feminist scholars have argued that the cultural construction of being a woman is a shared experience that can facilitate a sense of connection and deeper dialogue within interviews (Finch, 1984; Duelli Klein, 1983; Oakley, 1981). Others, however, claim that "women are divided by other variables [which] can affect the research process…. Women may share important experiences as a consequence of their gender [but] it is not sufficient to override structural

barriers of status, class, race, and disability" (Cotterill, 1992, p. 595; Ramazanoglu, 1989). My own positioning as a young, well-educated, female-professional who was approximately 12 years older than participants at the time of the interviews certainly had the potential to impact participants' perceptions and their experience of the interviews. Most if not all of the participants knew I was a faculty member at a university, with approximately twenty of them (57%) attending that same university at the time of the interview. In light of this difference in stage of life and status – and given the fact that I was directing the flow of the interview, which is its own form of power (Dixon, 2014; Eder & Fingerson, 2002) – it was important to promote participants' comfort and confidence levels, conveying to them their value and agency in the conversation. I did so by telling participants a bit about the purpose of the study, asking initial questions about the participants ("So tell me a little bit about yourself") at the opening of the interviews, and giving their responses my complete attention. I also avoided "controlling behaviors" (Dixon, 2015, p. 2074) that could have led subjects to associate me with my teaching role. I encouraged participants to ask any questions they might have, and to introduce new topics they felt were relevant (this was done at the conclusion of the interview). I let them know there were "no right answers," adapted to their pace of speaking, avoided interrupting, and demonstrated highly engaged nonverbal behaviors such as eye contact and nodding (Beyer, 2013; Dixon, 2015). In treating subjects with respect and interest, my goal was to make them feel as comfortable and as valued as possible in the interaction.

DATA ANALYSIS

A phenomenological approach to qualitative research values the description of individual experience and uses those descriptions as the foundation for interpreting patterns within the phenomenon in question (Peterson, 1987). As such, an iterative,

thematic analysis was appropriate for guiding the current exploration. Broadly, thematic analysis involves "qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings" (Patton, 2002, p. 453). In line with this, throughout the duration of data collection and analysis, the process of constant comparative analysis was used to identity, understand, and organize the themes that were found to be emerging from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Coding and Themes

From the very beginning of the data collection process, I conducted informal analyses of the transcripts being received, using broad, open coding to get a sense of key elements within the data, to be able to adjust the interview protocol if necessary (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). While no large-scale adjustments were made, here and there certain elements were examined with additional attention and probing within later interviews (e.g., advice and topic avoidance). Once it was clear that no new information was emerging from the interviews, in line with the requirements for saturation, data collection was concluded. Once all interview transcripts had been received, I went through and read the entire group of transcripts twice, jotting down informal notes in the margins relating to the ideas that had previously been emerging, as well as any new impressions gleaned which were not noticed previously. The transcripts were then organized (broadly) according to the research questions of the study. Using open coding, I analyzed transcripts line by line and compared transcripts to each other to further understand and document the commonalities and patterns across participants' accounts (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Charmaz, 2003). Using memo writing (Tracy, 2013) and taking into account the insights contained in the field notes and audit trail, these initial solidified codes were collapsed into higher level

categories and themes. As themes began to take shape, I continued to write memos about them, further exploring what they meant and what other details they contained. Finally, once themes and subthemes had been organized, participant quotes were chosen to represent and further explicate each idea (Baxter & Eyles, 1997).

Sensitizing Concepts

Goldsmith's normative model of social support (2001, 2004) served as a foundation for the analysis, providing sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2006) which guided the coding procedures. For example, within Goldsmith's model, the goals of the support receiver (task, identity, and relational) are of interest, as well as the receiver's subjective evaluation of support in light of its attendance to those goals. Additionally, a key element of the model is the connection between the perceived success of a message (i.e., daughters' satisfaction with mothers' support) and its effect on coping and well-being. These elements helped to provide direction during analysis, but ultimately all codes arose directly from the data. The daughters in this study discussed a variety of topics relating to a range of communication behaviors (as is showcased in Chapter 4). For a listener well-versed in communication and/or social science theories, it was easy to notice when their stories mapped onto or echoed relevant theoretical constructs such as uncertainty, stress and coping, dialectics, privacy management, and so forth. Because the approach of the current study was to examine supportive communication (enacted support, rather than perceived support or network support), this sensitized the analysis to some degree. While participant narratives shaped and guided the development of themes, the nature of this study as grounded in the supportive communication paradigm created a recognizable lens. For example, if daughters noted that their mothers' advice made them feel like a child, or their mothers' listening patterns caused them to feel neglected, or their mothers' lack of experience in their field

prevented their questions from being answered productively – these could be labeled as identity, relationship, and task concerns respectively, given the theoretical underpinnings of the study.

Trustworthiness of the Data

When conducting qualitative research, safeguarding and highlighting the rigor of the methodology and analysis is key (Farley & McLafferty, 2003). The first step towards this was maintaining a comprehensive audit trail, including "detailed records of methods and decisions taken before and during the research process" (Farley & McLafferty, 2003, p. 163). Directly following each interview, I took time to write down field notes about the interview, highlighting noteworthy elements of the interview, recurring themes, and questions. I also composed regular memos detailing the analysis process (Tracy, 2012). This information, in addition to the interview transcripts, helped to create a clear picture of how the research progressed and why and how everything was done. Ideally, a researcher wants to provide a clear "decision trail" (Farley & McLafferty, 2003, p. 163) that could be easily followed and understood by another researcher looking into the work.

In addition to a comprehensive audit trail, triangulation was used to supply greater rigor to the analysis and increased credibility to the themes. The concept of triangulation involves strengthening trustworthiness by making sure multiple sources and methods can create similar results (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Krefting, 1990). First, source triangulation was employed, meaning I included multiple quotes and examples from participants to showcase all of the themes in the data (Baxter & Eyles, 1997). A second form of triangulation included peer debriefing, which involved "exposing data and interpretations to a respected colleague in order to point out possible sources of misinterpretation and the 'suppression of themes or voices that do not fit the storyline'" (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p.

514). I consulted with multiple, respected colleagues, including junior and senior scholars, throughout the process of uncovering, narrowing, and organizing themes, as well as afterwards when analysis was complete. I also sent the findings to several communication researchers who are familiar with interpersonal and family communication literature and/or who conduct qualitative research themselves. Some individuals offered minor suggestions for ordering of themes or clarification of wording, but – in each case – they voiced support for, and agreement with, the overall interpretations and results.

Secondly, I sought to strengthen the trustworthiness of the data by engaging in member checking (Baxter & Eyles, 1997; Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) which, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) is "the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). This process involves bringing the finalized data back to a few of the participants to determine whether the final analysis is adequate and reflective of their thoughts and experience. While participants do not have "privileged access to the truth" (Hammersley, 1992, p. 65), their perspective is valued within the realm of interpretive inquiry and therefore their reflections on the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the data matter. The study's main themes (including descriptions and exemplars) were sent to eight randomly selected participants. Five of them responded, voicing enthusiastic agreement with the themes as accurate and illustrative of their experience. One respondent stated, "This was incredible for me to read through. Seeing how in-line my comments were with the other girls was moving. We all have such unique experiences with our mothers (especially during this stage), however I felt so similarly to SO many of these responses that it was almost healing for me." Another participant responded, "That's pretty awesome that you found all of this! These are things I definitely saw and felt but couldn't always put into words myself. You did a great job – this is spot on!" Finally, one subject commented, "As I read

through your table of themes, I kept thinking, 'Yep, that's my mom,' or 'Oh look! That's how conversations go 99% of the time.' This made me reflect on my mom and I's relationship over the past year and realize 'Ok, so it's not just us.'" Through member checking, I was able to further fortify the credibility of my interpretations by verifying the final results with several of those who had participated.

One final way to increase rigor is through negative case analysis (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This iterative process attempts to ascertain situations and individuals for which the findings would not hold true. This encourages researchers to constantly revise and compare themes across all the data and all participants, "serv[ing] to explore numerous dimensions of a theme in order to make it robust" (Baxter & Eyles, 1997, p. 514). Within this project, as I developed and honed the study's themes, I continued to search for "negative or disconfirming evidence" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208) within the data, checking to make sure that the finalized themes represented subjects' experiences as a whole.

In sum, by maintaining an audit trail, engaging in negative case analysis, and conducting peer debriefings and member checks, I have attempted to clearly establish the rigor of the method and the overall trustworthiness of the findings.

Chapter 4: Results

The goal of this dissertation was to investigate how emerging adult women experienced the transition from college to career, and how they evaluated the nature and outcomes of their communication with their mothers during this period of time. In order to understand these processes, participants were asked to reflect thoughtfully over the events and characteristics of the transition itself (RQ1), the patterns of communication enacted between them and their mothers (RQ2), the helpfulness or unhelpfulness of their mothers' behaviors over the course of the transition (RQ3), and the effects of said communication on participants' navigation of the transition experience (RQ4). The results of this inquiry are organized as follows: First, I will present participants' descriptions of the stressors that accompanied their transition from college to career, since this arose as a defining feature of their experience. Second, I will explore daughters' perceptions of transition-related conversations with their mothers, focusing specifically on daughters' evaluations of their mothers' communicative responses as more or less effective and satisfying.

Stressors Experienced During the Transition from College to Career

Consistent with the notion that the transition from college to career can be a stressful one (Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Nelson et al., 2007), the current investigation uncovered multiple, specific types of stress described by the emerging adult daughters who were interviewed. According to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theory of stress and coping, psychological stress ensues when "the relationship between the person and the environment is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well-being" (p. 21). In other words, stress is an interaction between the demands an individual is facing and the personal or social resources they possess to handle or cope with those demands. If the perceived demands on a person appear (to them)

to outweigh their available resources, they will evaluate the situation as stressful and may attempt to cope with it in various ways. Those interviewed for this study discussed their transition experiences in ways that showcased this negotiation between perceived demands and perceived abilities and/or supports. As such, this transactional perspective on stress will inform our understanding of the pressures and worries reported by the women in this study.

We know that the transition from college to career can be stressful, but one of the goals of this dissertation was to understand what specific stressors were present in the lives of participants during this time period. In soliciting the experiences of women in the middle of said transition, there emerged two broad classes of stressors: (a) those experienced while searching for a job and (b) those experienced after starting a job – which, in most cases, roughly translated to pre-graduation vs. post-graduation stress. Of the 35 women interviewed, 60% were approaching the start of their careers (pre-graduation), while the other 40% had already begun their first year of work (post-graduation). Participants who were still on the job market at the time of their interviews reported struggling with (1) facing the unknown, (2) navigating decision-making, (3) worrying about financial independence, and (4) satisfying expectations. Those who already had jobs described the difficulties of (1) adjusting to new rhythms and (2) battling isolation. The nuances and potential causes of each of these stressors are described in greater detail below.

SEARCHING FOR A JOB (PRE-GRADUATION PHASE)

For individuals in their senior of year of college, questions surrounding the future can feel ever-present and, at times, overwhelming. The logistics of pursuing answers to those questions can be both time-consuming and nerve-wracking (Yang & Gysbers, 2007). In addition to their normal coursework requirements, extracurricular commitments, and

social obligations, the women I spoke to reported spending a great deal of time and effort researching positions, applying for jobs, tweaking their resumes, attending career fairs, pursuing contacts within their network, traveling for interviews, and – in general – worrying about the unknowns relating their immediate future. Kayla, age 21, who planned to pursue a career in sports broadcasting, described the experience in this way: "It's so nerve-wracking because I'm thinking about resumes, jobs, *all that stuff*. It should be exciting, but it's terrifying. I just filled out my graduation application and that was terrifying. I'm just trying to keep myself afloat." For Kayla, keeping afloat meant successfully juggling a myriad of logistical tasks, while simultaneously engaging in the mental labor of wondering if/when/how the details of the next chapter would fall into place. This busyness reported by Kayla and others could be argued to be a form of problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman, Lazarus, Dunkel-Schetter, DeLongis, & Gruen, 1986). In Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) model, when individuals attempt to cope with stress, they may do so by engaging in emotion-focused coping (aimed at regulating a negative emotional state) or problem-focused coping (attempting to counter or control the stressful forces at work). Actively researching, networking, and applying for jobs was a part of finding employment, but those behaviors also appeared to represent a common coping tactic for the women in this study because, in doing so, they felt as if they were making progress toward their goal. Overall, many concerns weighed on the minds of the women interviewed. But, for those approaching college graduation, the following rose to the surface as the most vivid and shared stressors.

Facing the Unknown

While a few participants reported feeling excited about the unknowns in their future, most of those interviewed spoke with trepidation about not having a firmly-formed

plan relating to the next stage of their lives. Kayla's (and others') so-called suspension between "excitement" and "terror" was reflective of the ideas of Brashers (2001) and colleagues who posit that the experience of uncertainty itself (which underpins the concept of facing the unknown) is not innately good or bad (Hogan & Brashers, 2009). In fact, uncertainty can evoke a range of positive and negative emotions, such as optimism, hope, insecurity, or torment (Brashers et al., 2009). Arguably, it all depends on how the uncertainty is appraised. According to Brashers' uncertainty management theory (UMT), when individuals encounter uncertainties, they evaluate the extent to which those uncertainties are a cause for stress or positive affect. Hitching to the aforementioned ideas of Lazarus and Folkman (1984), Brashers (2001) argues that, subsequent to their appraisals of the uncertainty in question, people will act to manage it. Some women in this study evaluated the unknowns of the future as positive, but most talked about the negative aspects of the uncertainty. For women who had been in school for, presumably, the last seventeen years of their life, the anticipation of launching into a new chapter containing undetermined, unexperienced patterns was described as being stressful to them. And while certain elements of the job search process remained under their conscious control (actively pursuing leads, applying for many jobs, attending career fairs), others were outside their purview (interest from potential employees, wait times, official offers), meaning they had to wait to make firm plans about timing, location, and other related matters. As such, their sense of uncertainty was drawn out. Morgan, a 21-year-old senior who was graduating early and deciding between going to grad school or pursuing a job in industry, expressed her sense of unease:

> I definitely prefer to have a plan. When it comes to what's going on in the future, I like to have *some sort of inkling* of what I might do. For me, *the fear of the unknown is definitely not something that I enjoy.* I want to know what's happening next.

Likewise, Heather, age 21, a marketing major, was nervous about entering a new phase that was completely new and different than the one she was currently in:

> I've been doing school for sixteen years. I've gotten so used to college life. I've become so dependent on that. It's like, ok, I have three months of summer and then I'm back taking classes. I know exactly what it's going to be like. So the unknown factors are *if I get a job* and *if that's going to be a difficult adjustment*. Everything's going to be different.

Marie, age 22, a senior communication major who had struggled with family upheaval in the past, expressed her feelings surrounding the impending change in routines and relationships:

> Change is really hard for me. I finally settled into a routine, and now suddenly life's about to change. I'm going to have to move somewhere else and start over. Friendships are hard for me and just now that I've got a good friend group here, suddenly we're all leaving. I don't know what kind of job I'm going to end up with, so I don't know if I'm going to have an opportunity to socialize and get out, or get to experiment and explore. That's pretty challenging, not knowing.

Finally, Daniela, age 20, was a first generation college student who was graduating early and hoping to pursue a career in law. Daniela's thoughts on the future were impacted by her somewhat unsuccessful search for information:

> I don't know exactly how [post-grad life] works or how it functions. I don't exactly know what I should be prepared for. Even though I ask a lot of people and they tell

me things, they're all different things. I don't exactly know who to believe or what's right and what's wrong, which is hard.

In the words of Brashers (2001), "Uncertainty exists when details of situations are ambiguous, complex, and unpredictable" (p. 478). Morgan, Heather, and Marie's interviews showcased this connection between not knowing and subsequent feelings of stress. Daniela's descriptions also fell in line with Brashers' (2001) assertions that individuals experience uncertainty when they lack confidence in their knowledge of a situation (Shaha, Cox, Talman, & Kelly, 2008) or when they lack adequate or dependable information. Daniela actively searched for information that would reduce her sense of uncertainty, but receiving contradictory responses interfered with this goal.

The women interviewed openly acknowledged that grappling with the unknowns of the future was an unavoidable part of the process of graduating. Nevertheless, they expressed reservations, hesitations, and anxiety about the many unknown, unplanned aspects of the next stage. Questions of when, what, and where seemed to be at the forefront of their minds, causing worry and unease. But, as many of them described, their only choice was to push forward completing their job searching tasks and hoping that the pieces would fall together sooner rather than later, to relieve them of the burden of the unknown. These narratives were reflective of both Brashers' (2001) explanations of uncertainty management and Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) descriptions of stress and coping.

Navigating Decision-Making

While some elements of the job search process were outside of these seniors' control (which caused stress, as described above), other aspects of their journey to finding a job did involve personal determinations and decisions. Surprisingly, in light of how uneasy participants felt about the unknowns and their inability to make firm plans, many

also reported being stressed about their decisions, those things over which they did have some say. As it relates to decision-making, the women interviewed struggled with (a) having too many options; (b) making the right choice; and (c) making important determinations about location and proximity to family and friends.

An Abundance of Choices

Some participants seemed overwhelmed by the sheer number and variety of choices that were available to them in the next stage of their lives, which echoed yet another element of Brashers' (2001) ideas surrounding uncertainty: namely, that deciding from amongst alternatives, yet feeling ill-equipped to conclusively and clearly do so, was a cause of uncertainty and, in turn, stress. Marie, a senior mentioned earlier, acknowledged,

> It's definitely overwhelming when you think about it – *there are just so many directions*. And with my major being communication and my minor being in leadership, there are a lot of ways that you can go with that. I think that's the biggest decision – finding a starting point and *narrowing it down* from there.

Holly, age 23, a recent grad and new graduate student, also felt overwhelmed by her selection process. After having considered her myriad interests, Holly eventually decided on a career in sociology. This is how she described her difficulty narrowing down her options:

> I've felt very overwhelmed by the millions of different routes I could take. Like, in one phone call with my brother, I had listed becoming a senator, a campaign manager, a policy analyst, a professor, and a minister, all as potential career choices for me. I think that sums up the main source of stress – just the *overwhelmedness of all the routes*. *So many things.* What will I pick? How will I pick? It's a real challenge. It's intimidating.

Finally, according to Claire, age 22, a senior communication major:

> There are just *so many choices*. I mean, one time it took me 30 minutes to choose a shampoo. So, if I have problems with that, what about life choices? I'm at this point where I really don't have any tethers holding me down. I could go anywhere. I love that idea, but it's also overwhelming because I'm like, oh wow, *I could go anywhere and do anything*. That's a lot to consider.

Claire and others talked about their transition-related decisions in ways that implied significance – as if these decisions were weightier and more long-lasting in their effects than others. Even though Claire had, in her words, a number of "good options" available, this abundance of choices was part of what felt stressful.

Sometimes people feel stressed by a lack of options. But a noticeable trend within these interviews was respondents' feelings of uncertainty and stress because they had too many options, or they were not even sure where to start in pursuing options because there were so many directions their careers and next stages could take.

Making the Right Choice

As described, for some, the number of options available to them was stressful. But for others, it was more their concern about making the best choice that caused them worry and indecision. Emma, age 22, was a business major who described being highly focused on her career, even in adolescence. Emma fondly remembered her mother (who was a successful professional) quizzing her with mock interview questions in the car on the way to middle school. Emma had already received several job offers and had this to say:

> I'm nervous because I don't want to pick the wrong company and hate going to work every day. I don't want to have to look back and wonder, "What would have

happened if I picked that company over this company?" The trajectory of my career based on that *first* place of employment – that's what worries me.

Another participant, Grace, age 21, was a sociology major who was pursuing a career in social work. Grace's mother struggled with mental health problems, and their rocky relationship took center stage in Grace's interview. In relation to her post-grad options, Grace said, "I don't know where I'm going to go or if I'm going to enjoy it. It's this fear of being unhappy. *Will I make the right decision?* Will I get into something and then be trapped?" Given Grace's tumultuous background, the concept of avoiding unhappiness seemed important to her. But without a clear guide for what it meant to find and secure happiness, this probably seemed like a very complex prospect. If picking the so-called "right" path was part of Grace arriving at happiness and contentment – and she was without the means or information to know exactly how to do that – this was likely to cause negative feelings of uncertainty and stress (Brashers, 2001).

Natalie, age 23, a graduate who was settling into her new job in marketing, described her thinking while on the job market: "Finding a job was a big stress. But then deciding *if the job was good for me or not* – I think that was the biggest stress. Finding *the right job*. Not just taking one to take one." Again, if the demands of choosing from amongst alternatives appeared to surpass the resources available to an individual in making those choices, it should be expected that stress will ensue (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Proximity Considerations

A prevailing topic amongst the women interviewed was deciding on potential locations for the next chapter of their life. This specifically related to where they should apply for jobs and which job offers they should consider. For many, thoughts about location seemed closely linked to considerations relating to their family and/or friends; they were

torn between staying near their social network or spreading their wings and moving elsewhere. Some of this indecision was self-induced – participants felt close to their families and wanted to be near them – whereas others felt pressure from parents to find a job near the family. In some cases, participants were taking into consideration their romantic partners, seeming torn between wanting to be near their partners and the stigma they felt accompanied following someone instead of independently choosing where to look for jobs and settle. While daughters spoke at length about the difficulty of choosing a "location," it appeared that proximity to loved ones (rather than mere geography) was frequently at the center of this stressor. In their descriptions of location considerations, many participants focused less on what they or their parents liked/disliked about certain regions or cities, and more on how close or far those places were from home.

Some women, like Paige, age 22, a senior entrepreneurship major who was close to her mother but still wanted to spread her wings, expressed interest in landing in a place where they already knew someone: "I would love to go somewhere where I know a few people. I still want to have connections. I don't want to live as a hermit somewhere." Others – like Marie, the senior who did not like change – were thinking about what they were comfortable with in terms of the size of the area: "The biggest factor is where I want to end up. Coming from a really small town, Waco is almost too big for me. So I know Dallas is going to feel huge. I'm trying to find a good balance." Furthermore, Claire (mentioned earlier), who felt relatively untethered and a bit overwhelmed by all the things she could do, indicated being torn about moving far from family: "Location is stressful. I would love to go *anywhere*. But I am really close to my family, so there's this apprehension. These competing ideas of, 'Oh that's far away,' but it's also only a plane ride." Crystal, age 23, a senior communication major, had a tentative job offer abroad, but she was visibly upset

while discussing how torn she was between taking a great job, considering her family, and also wanting to be near her romantic partner:

> Location is a huge struggle for me. I want to apply for a bunch of different jobs in many locations, but my family is in Texas, my boyfriend is in California, my best friend is in California. So I'm applying for jobs there, but I don't want to make that *a thing*. If I were to get a real opportunity, I would need to take it, [tearful] but it's so hard. *I don't know what to do. It's just a struggle with my friends and family.*

On the other side of the coin, Vanessa, age 22, a senior apparel marketing major, described her mother as her best friend and closest confidant/counselor. She was a first generation American and felt a strong pull to stay close to her parents and sister. According to Vanessa,

> I'm anxious to see where I'll be. I'm from California, so right now I'm torn between staying here in Texas, or going back, or trying something completely new. I like to be adventurous and try new things because I'm young and this is the time to do it. But my mom is from Argentina, my dad is from Italy, and we're the only ones here in the U.S. We are a very tight-knit family and we don't want to separate from each other, but obviously we all have our dreams and passions, and sometimes it's not possible to be together. I talked to my mom about possibly working in Europe, but she is hesitant. She's like, "Why? Don't leave us. Let's try to stay all together."

For many participants, considering the possibility of moving away from their established support network was a difficult one. Despite wanting to experience new places and explore their independence, participants felt torn between multiple interesting yet conflicting options. This was reflective of Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) framework of relational dialectics. In relation to this issue of location and proximity, it seemed that

daughters were wrestling with the tensions of integration-separation (and related issues of autonomy) and stability-change. In desiring to grow in their independence (by moving away) daughters were necessarily giving up close proximity and perhaps in-depth involvement in their family and friendship circles. Conversely, in deciding to stay close to home, they may have been sacrificing some of their own freedom and personal development. Furthermore, this was a time in their life when they were simultaneously having positive and negative feelings toward change. In choosing to stay close to home, they would be able to maintain familiarity, but they may have foregone novelty and various unique experiences in the process. However, in leaving and pursuing new experiences, they may have sacrificed a sense of stability and predictability that was valuable to them. According to relational dialectics, these types of tensions can be difficult to manage (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996), and not feeling confident or fully knowledgeable doing so can cause stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Overall, whether it related to issues of proximity, picking between multiple options, or selecting the ostensibly best/right option, those interviewed were clearly concerned with the decision-making process, both in the abstract and the specific. Though not explicitly acknowledged by them, the underpinnings of their struggle with the unknown were rooted in scholarly understandings of the stress and difficulties of uncertainty management.

Worrying about Financial Independence

Another main concern of the emerging adult women interviewed in this study was money. Participants were worried about making enough money to be able to live on their own, apart from their parents, while being able to pay all of their bills. Stress relating to the (hoped for) achievement of financial independence was a consistent theme across interviews; even those who had already begun their careers brought up money as a

continuing concern in their lives. For those approaching graduation, however, this issue seemed one of the most pressing. Daughters were intent on no longer being financially burdensome and/or obligated to their parents. And, in some cases, parents were clear about the fact that they would no longer be providing financial assistance. In all cases, participants were hopeful but not entirely confident that they would be able find employment gainful enough to ensure independence and pay all their bills.

Marissa, age 22, a senior communication major at a large public university, was raised by a Midwestern mother with, according to her, a strong "nose to the grindstone" mentality. Marissa hoped to go to grad school and eventually earn a PhD, but she was worried about the financial aspects of that: "I don't care what job it is as long as I'm getting paid. I'm definitely stressed about paying for rent and stuff like that. I'm scared about not getting a job that will pay enough." Similarly, Paige, the aspiring entrepreneur mentioned earlier, was torn between following her passions versus successfully paying the bills:

> I'm going to have to start thinking more realistically about finances. My parents are supporting me, but that's about to change. I'll be completely on my own and I'm constantly thinking about that. I really want to pursue what I'm passionate about. But I feel like I need to consider how much I'm making, even though I don't want that to be my priority.

Some daughters were cognizant of their parents' clear expectations relating to their financial independence after graduation. Brooke, age 22, was only a few months away from graduation when we spoke. Brooke was a successful YouTube influencer who talked at length about her parents' focus on money while she was growing up. According to Brooke,

> My main stress has been money – making sure that, when I graduate, I'm off of my parents 110%. Insurance, phone bill, all of it. *I feel a lot of pressure to make sure I'm making enough to where I don't have to bother my parents anymore.*

Conversely, Selena, age 22, was a first generation college student who actively managed a health condition which impacted her success at school. She did not feel fully understood by her mother in this area, but felt pressure from her mother to be driven and successful both now and after graduation. One of her main concerns was money because she knew that her parents would stop supporting her after she graduated:

> One of the major things I think about is how I'm going to accomplish the mundane necessities, paying for everything. It's been a very consistent thing that my parents are like, "As soon as you're out of college, that's it, you'll figure it out." And I get it, for sure, but that worries me. Our communication always reinforces that idea and it adds stress. What if I can't find a good job right away, what am I going to do? What if I have to work a menial job that won't pay the rent?

All in all, participants felt nervous about how quickly or how successfully they could achieve financial independence following graduation. This was yet another unknown which plagued the girls' minds, and another element of the decision-making process that concerned them. There was a noticeable tension for many of them between pursuing a job they could enjoy, and finding a job that would pay the bills right out of the gate. Some daughters had been told by their parents that they could keep living at home if need be, although none of them seemed interested in this prospect; other daughters, however, were well aware that their parents could not or would not continue supporting them after graduation. In both types of situations, daughters were eager to be able to support themselves fully and in a timely manner.

Some of the stress described above was coming from participants' perceptions of the demands that were (or were soon to be) upon them, while simultaneously feeling that they were ill-equipped to meet these demands, for various reasons. Feelings of uncertainty about if they would get a job, when they would get a job, and what kind of job it would be (from a financial standpoint) played into this as well. Some participants felt strongly about being out from under their parents' financial authority, while others knew it is inevitable (at their parents' insistence), whether they liked it or not. For the former group, this reflected a continuing navigation of the integration-separation tension described above (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Furthermore, in line with the research of Romo and colleagues (Romo, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Romo & Abetz, 2016), money can be a topic ripe with uncertainty and stress within families. Romo and Abetz (2016) found that competing cultural discourses about money (e.g., "money is everything" vs. "money isn't everything," p. 101) caused tension between relational partners. The women in this study appeared to be negotiating these cultural discourses themselves, attempting to discern their own priorities while balancing these with those of their parents'.

Satisfying Expectations

The women I interviewed experienced stress due to evaluating themselves against the experiences and/or expectations of other people in their life, whether peers, siblings, parents, or other acquaintances. Some participants felt unsettled when friends landed jobs, while others experienced pressure from parents to prioritize certain types of paths over others. Further, women reported feeling stressed and unsure of themselves when others in the same undergraduate department or major found jobs or knew what was happening next.

Amy, age 22, a senior communication major at a private university who was very close with her mother, described feeling a bit lost amongst her roommates: "I live with six

girls, so coming back to school for senior year I was overwhelmed because we're all trying to figure out what life after college will be like. A lot of my roommates have a direction, so that was overwhelming that they knew what they were doing." Individually, Amy was not one to worry about the next stage; but when others were finding jobs and she was not, this concerned her. She only felt insecure about her prospects in response to the timing of others' offers. Business majors in particular described feeling pressured by the departmental norm of everyone having a job early-on in senior year and definitely before graduation. According to Heather, mentioned earlier, who was still figuring out what she wanted to pursue post-college,

> There's so much pressure in the business school. A lot of people compete to be like, "Oh I have this awesome job lined up," or "I have the rest of my career figured out." I naturally compare myself to people, so there's a lot of pressure to have everything figured out. People think it's not ok to go back and live with your parents for a little bit. I think it's a mixture of *figuring out what I am okay with and what I want to do, versus the pressure of society.*

Heather felt comfortable with the idea of traveling for a while before working, or initially living with her parents while interning at a nonprofit, but these were not widely accepted constructs within her academic peer group, which made her more stressed about her indecision. Another [former] business major, Courtney, age 23, was a graduate who successfully landed a job in the tech industry. She described her relationship with her mother as close and supportive but, as an only child, she also felt that her mother was overinvolved at times. Courtney echoed Heather's sentiments:

> That was a huge goal of mine – to have a job locked down by the end of senior year, to have a place in mind where I would to be. Business students just have it

> drilled into their heads that you need to get a job by the time you graduate. I also didn't want to disappoint. My mom, as soon as she graduated, got a job in Louisiana and she's originally from Wyoming. So that was a big thing for her – she moved right away. I knew I wanted to follow in her footsteps. *There's pressure on having it down, having my future planned out.*

Daniela and Selena (both previously mentioned) were first generation college students with hard-working, driven, successful mothers. Both participants talked about the weighty expectations they felt from their mothers. According to Daniela, "I like knowing that I'm helping change generations, but it's also nerve-wracking because what if I mess up? I have to set the bar high." Explaining her experiences further, she said

> My mom and I were talking about college and she said, "You know, you're going to college debt-free. If you don't become a lawyer, then everything we worked for is pretty much useless." And I was like, "Useless? Everything I did?" There's a constant reminder that, if I don't succeed, there's no worth in what I've done. That's scary. My mom wants me to be a real estate lawyer. I told her, "I love you, but I don't like real estate. I already want to be a lawyer – that should be enough for you." Sometimes it's hard because I have to confront her and say, "These are my dreams. *And even though I love you, I don't want to do what you've chosen for me.* Everyone gets to have their own thing they want to do." It's hard because she's the woman who gave me life.

Selena felt a sense of obligation to her parents to take certain career paths and be successful in them:

> My mom wants me to be successful. She wants to see my education pay off. My parents want me and my sister to be able to take care of them when they get older.

> And of course we're going to, but I don't want to think about that right now. That's a very pervasive idea – that the return on investment will come. But they want to see it right away. What do I do with that? I'll try my best, I always do. But if it's not good enough, what happens? Currently my parents are supporting me, and I'm very grateful for that, but there's also ties that come with that. *I feel like I need to do what they want me to do because they're funding me.*

These pressures, whether relating to when one finds a job in comparison to peers, or to one's ability to satisfy parents' expectations, increased the overall stress of the transition for the women interviewed. The women found themselves having to weigh their own desires and expectations versus those of others, which further complicated their decision-making abilities and the stress they felt when things did not work out as planned. The need to reframe and rationalize deviating from others' paths was evident in Claire's comments on the subject:

> Am I placing value in the opinions of others or what I think myself? I want to be ok with whatever the next step is, and *not have to measure it against anyone else's expectations or what anyone else is doing.*

This was something that appeared to be easier said than done for many of the women in the study. Wanting to measure up to others' standards was something that caused noticeable stress for them; either they did not know if they could succeed in meeting outside expectations or they did not know how their perceived status and value would be affected if they failed.

When it comes to the stressors that accompany daughters' approach to graduation, the main issues reported centered on their negative feelings toward the unknown, the perceived difficulty of decision-making, the importance of establishing financial

independence, and the difficulty of choosing to heed or ignore others' prescriptions for this time of life.

STARTING A JOB (POST-GRADUATION PHASE)

While all of the women in this study were familiar with the stress of the job hunt, 40% of those interviewed had already graduated and started working. These women echoed the experiences described in the previous sections, but they also went on to detail a different set of worries that affected them after graduation. Specifically, these women struggled with (1) adjusting to a new pace of life and (2) establishing a new community. In regards to the former, women reported a huge change in the rhythm of life, as compared to that of college; additional job stress, a new schedule, and the challenges of navigating a new environment and learning new things – all of these experiences created additional strain as participants attempted to settle into their new post-grad lives. As to the latter, participants grappled with feelings of loneliness, as well as with the difficulties of making new friends in the ways they had been accustomed to previously.

Adjusting to a New Pace of Life

The women in this study who were in the first year of their careers discussed the "culture shock" of the transition from college to career. Much of this related to the completely new schedule and set of priorities that came with having a full-time job instead of being in college. Many of them mentioned how difficult it was adjusting to the new structure of adult life, specifically as it related to the organization of their time and the additional responsibilities accompanying their jobs. According to Abigail, a 23-year-old recent grad and first year Master's student: "The transition has been difficult in a lot of ways. College is very structured, lots of friends. You know everyone senior year, it's super

purposeful, and very established." In her words, Abigail felt that everything "narrowed" after college – her circle of friends, the range of activities she could be involved in, even the specificity of her work as opposed to her undergraduate studies.

Some participants discussed the difficulty of striking a reasonable, doable, healthy work-life balance in the new stage. According to Natalie, a marketing professional who was introduced previously:

> It's been tough going from super flexible scheduling, having class 50 minutes a couple times of day, to having to be in an office setting from 8-5 Monday through Friday. I'm still adjusting to it, even though it's been almost a year. *It's been challenging finding that work-life balance.* In college, you had so much free time, but now that I'm in a job, *it's hard to find the right balance* in that.

Likewise, Alicia, age 23, who graduated from a college in the southwest, but moved back home to the northeast to work in the publishing industry, described the unanticipated stress of the schedule change:

> Everything changed so drastically. What I noticed most – and what I'm still learning to deal with – is that, in college, you get to come home for breaks and, if you have personal needs, you can tend to them. *But with work, you're expected to be on your A-game consistently throughout the day.* It's important that, when you walk in the door, you push your personal life aside. That's very hard for me. I think that's becoming an adult. If I'm consumed with a problem outside of work, I cannot bring it into the workplace or let it affect my performance because I'm working in a team of 12 people and everyone's counting on me. You're expected to do your tasks right away, and there are so many more deadlines that you have to meet. There's just no time.

Jennifer, age 23, was an outgoing recent graduate who worked at a tech marketing firm. She was close with her mother but moved far away from home. She echoed Alicia's experience:

> It's definitely a culture shock. It's more intensive, the days are a lot longer, and you don't get nap time between classes like you used to [laughing]. There's more responsibility and more pressure. Not pressure to do your homework or write papers or study for tests, but there's this intensity of, "Oh, now there's this deadline! Oh, now it's the end of the quarter! Oh, now there's this other big task!" It's a total shift, and you can't even really explain it until you've transitioned into that. Even girls who are older who I get advice from would be like, "There's really nothing you can do to prepare for it except just being flexible and being organized." I had no idea it would be this involved. Six months ago I had no idea what any of it meant, and now *it's all I do all day*.

Post-grad participants spoke at length about the exhaustion that was accompanying their shift into the work force. Nina, age 22, a new assistant manager for a large food service supply company, described her experience of feeling completely stressed out and drained by the hours she was working. Despite her efforts to maintain a work-life balance, she found it difficult to really unplug:

> My job is really hard. I hate it actually. I've cried a lot to my mom. I'm just like, "What am I doing? My career should not be this stressful." I'm 22, this is only my third month working, I have a lifetime to go, and *I'm already this stressed out*. It's a lot of hours and overtime. *I'm trying to find a happy work-life balance*, making sure I come home and detox and take vacation time. But I wake up every morning and I'm still so tired.

In addition to the daily and weekly change of pace, Jennifer – introduced above – described a more macro change in the way time was marked and milestones were anticipated:

> Before graduation, it was that initial fear of having absolutely no idea what's to come. For my whole life up until college graduation, you can see exactly what's coming. You see the next goal, the next thing. But after graduation, it's just *into the abyss*, and there's no set timeframe for any life events. I think this can be a good thing but it's also terrifying when you're transitioning into that. *It's just a totally different mindset.*

For Alicia, Jennifer, and Nina, the exhaustion they experienced adjusting to the 40+ hour work week was a stress in and of itself, but it was also a barrier to them being able to engage in other forms of productive coping. For instance, exercising, reading, engaging in hobbies, exploring the new town, and visiting with friends were all potentially beneficial activities made difficult by how tired they were all of the time.

All in all, a key stressor for those in the first year of their careers was the change in structure: more hours spent working, more stress due to the nature of being in a new, busy job, and more exhaustion after work, which impacted work-life balance negatively. Even for those who explicitly mentioned their attempts at finding a healthy balance, they indicated that this was not easy – something they had not been fully expecting and/or prepared for when they officially transitioned into the workforce. Given the newness of the context they were in, as well as the additional responsibilities that were required of them, participants experienced heightened levels of stress during this time. In line with stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), these daughters experienced stress in settling into their new jobs/lives when the demands placed upon them were viewed to be exceeding their resources.

Feeling Isolated

Many of the participants in this study moved to a new place to start their careers. As such, a common theme in their stories was the difficulty of starting fresh from a relational standpoint. Having come from established networks of friends in college, the women interviewed reported feeling lonely. However, often the stress of their jobs prevented them from having the time and energy to intentionally pursue new friendships. Or, the thought of adding more new things to an already unfamiliar situation felt overwhelming. Mariah, age 22, was the first of her four sisters to graduate from college. She landed a job as a teacher in her college town, but this was far from where her family lived. She reported experiencing a sense of loneliness living farther from family and friends:

> I'm missing my family, now more than ever. I live alone and I'm not used to that. People told me you don't have a life after graduation because all your friends leave, and it's sort of true. We all went our separate ways. I don't have a lot of friends around here yet. I'm trying to look at everything with a positive light, but missing *my familiarity* – family, friends – that's the worst part of it.

Mariah had not thought she would be one of those people who, according to her, "didn't have a life" after college, but she was surprised to find that it took her longer to form new friendships than she had anticipated. Jennifer, who was employed in tech marketing, shared this sense of isolation that accompanied her new life:

> The transition is such an isolating event. The things you did with your friends in college, now you do alone. You go to the mall by yourself, the grocery store, sometimes the movies, even a restaurant, *by yourself*. There have been days where I didn't even talk to another person, except for my mom on the phone or maybe my

> roommate. It's going from being overstimulated and having people around all the time, to just me.

Jennifer had experienced a fairly communal lifestyle in college, living with a lot of housemates and being active in her sorority. She felt surprised and saddened by the solitary nature of this new chapter. According to Abigail, the first year grad student mentioned earlier:

> It's that feeling of being a fish out of water. Being a single, 22-year-old girl who moves to a different city brings inevitable challenges. You're walking into a lot of situations where you don't know people. Learning new people and new systems. Not having people that know you, know your background, know who you are. It's this sense of having to prove yourself or start from scratch. I think the transition into adulthood brings up a lot of questions of meaning, how you do this or that, and what is stable and secure. Internally – the anxiousness, the sadness about leaving, the weariness of *new things over and over and over* – it's hard.

Abigail was struggling to find a balance between the new and the familiar, but most of her life felt new and therefore foreign. This was reflective of Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) dialectical tension of predictability and novelty. For Abigail, being exposed to too much novelty was disorienting and stressful.

Selma, age 22, was in her first year of working as an engineer. She was living in a new city and navigating the in's and out's of a male-dominated field. She described the toll the transition can take on social relationships:

> The emotional toll of the transition was the hardest for me. I had to move locations, so there was the toll of having to move cross-country. And then the social aspect of transitioning out of college is also pretty rough because there's no longer forced

> social interaction. You're not always living with someone or around people in classes or studying. It was actually quite a transition to learn how to reach out to people if I wanted social interaction, and to keep in touch with old friends too. Moving locations and then navigating friendships and social life after that – those were the main things that were emotional and stressful.

While in college, friends (or potential friends) were everywhere, according to Selma. But with the professional constrains of the workplace, and no longer being a part of an established system like a university, forming close social ties seemed nearly impossible to her. Nina, the stressed assistant manager mentioned earlier, found church a helpful way to branch out and form the friendships she needed:

> I'm all alone in a new city. I do have the comfort of being a 45-minute drive away from my best friend, my boyfriend, and my parents. I try to balance seeing them often enough to keep me sane *while also branching out*. One of my first priorities was joining a church here. I wanted to find a group of girls that were in a similar stage of life. I actually joined a community group three weeks ago. There's six of us in the group, all 22 or 23, recently moved, not married. We've been meeting every week, catching up on life and talking about our jobs. *It's great to have that outlet because, for a while, I didn't have any friends and it was making me go crazy* because I had no one to talk besides my parents was my boyfriend.

Nina had been feeling socially isolated, but – in plugging into this larger structure that provided organized social activities and many potential friends – she was able to reduce her feelings of loneliness.

Many participants described their feelings of isolation and loneliness after graduation. For some, this was caused by not knowing where or how to meet new people;

for others, they were simply too tired after a long day or week to begin making social inroads. In both cases, the demands were appearing to exceed their resources, thereby causing stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to the sociological perspective on social support, integration into a social network is closely connected to health and wellness (Kawachi & Berkman, 2001; Uchino, 2004). Likewise, the psychological perspective claims that one's perception of having support should it be needed, is highly beneficial. Many of the women I spoke with were lacking in both of these areas, leading to the conclusion that, in addition to feeling stressed because of their new jobs, they also had fewer coping resources at their disposal because of their relative isolation (all of which could lead to negative health outcomes).

The preceding sections contribute to our knowledge of what stressors are faced by emerging adult women transitioning from college to career. Those approaching graduation were wrestling with certain worries, while those moving into their careers were grappling with others.

COMMUNICATION DURING THE TRANSITION

One of the purposes of this study was to more fully understand if and how mothers and daughters communicate during daughters' transition to from college to career. Participants were asked to reflect over [their perceptions of] their patterns of communication with their mothers during this time, and the themes within their commentary form the basis of the following sections. In support of this study's earlier supposition that daughters are likely to consult with their mothers during the transition from college to career (Eaton & Bradley, 2008), it was found that those interviewed did indeed communicate with their mothers about such topics. Overall, daughters reported speaking with their mothers about a variety of transition-related issues.

Daughters differed in what sorts of things they discussed with their mothers and why, but – as mentioned – most participants in this study talked often with their mothers about various aspects of their transition process. For instance, Natalie, 23, who successfully landed a job in marketing after college, said her mother helped her through the challenges of finding and adjusting to the position:

> We talk a lot about the transition. It was difficult for me at the beginning, finding the right job, and she talked me through that. Now finally having a job, she's helping me through that. I talk to her about the transition and how it is difficult. She helps me through it all.

Natalie believed her mother played an important role in her adjustment. She consulted with her mother often, on a variety of subjects, and felt that this back-and-forth communication was a critical part of her figuring things out. Similarly, Selma (the engineer) found that her mother was a good person to go to with questions, although, in her words, she primarily talked to her mother about logistical "life stuff," not work issues:

> My mom will be at the bottom of the priority list for *some* subjects, like work. But she'll be at the top of the list if it comes to everyday-life questions. For example, I didn't know how to schedule a doctor's appointment. I didn't understand medical insurance or picking a medical plan. She's a really good life coach. She's got a wealth of knowledge. I'm really thankful for it.

Selma acknowledged that her mother possessed a valuable knowledge base, especially as it related to practical, everyday (task-related) matters.

According to Goldsmith (2004), supportive behaviors are subject to evaluation by the receiver of said behaviors. A support recipient considers the perceived intent of the sender, features of the message itself, how closely the sender attended to situational or

emotional nuances, and so forth; based on these evaluations, the receiver determines whether or not they feel the support was effective/satisfying/helpful (successful) or ineffective/unsatisfying/unhelpful (unsuccessful), which then relates to coping. In the words of Goldsmith (2004), "Support that is evaluated as having some positive value is more likely to facilitate coping, whereas support that is evaluated negatively is less likely to assist with coping and could even prove harmful to coping efforts" (p. 26). In discussing mothers' handling of the transition and attempts at support, daughters' accounts converged around distinct themes relating to both helpful and unhelpful behaviors. In the following pages, I will first present daughters' accounts of unhelpful/unsatisfying support from their mother, followed by daughters' descriptions of helpful/satisfying support. Each section will also include a brief exploration of daughters' perceptions of the effects of poor vs. good support on their transition.

INEFFECTIVE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION (AND OUTCOMES) DURING THE TRANSITION

In soliciting and analyzing the experiences of participants, it became clear that the daughters interviewed were highly attuned to mothers' level of involvement in their transition, as well as mothers' explicit or implicit treatment of their independence and agency as emerging adults. Some daughters felt their mothers were too involved in the details of their transition, while others thought their mothers were not involved enough. And, while daughters were clearly interested in mothers' input, they reported being frustrated when mothers were too directive, or too insistent on their own ideas for what their daughters should do. Messages perceived to be of an opinionated or controlling nature served to challenge or invalidate daughters' desired adult identity at this time of their lives. Overall, issues relating to independence (and, by extension, identity) were unquestionably at the forefront of daughters' commentary – even when unprompted. Additionally,

daughters discussed specific conversational elements like mothers' listening behaviors and use of questions. The topic of mothers' questions arose unexpectedly from within the data; the study's interview protocol included no references to questions (whether mothers' or daughters'), but there emerged a noticeable congruence between participants in regards to their unprompted introduction of the topic, as well as their evaluation of questions as more or less helpful depending on certain characteristics. Finally, as will be discussed briefly at the end of this section, daughters provided commentary on the effects of all these factors on their navigation of the transition.

In sum, as it regards ineffective communication and outcomes during the transition from college to career, the themes presented in the following section include (1) mothers undermining daughters' autonomy, (2) perceived preeminence of mothers' ideas, (3) unhelpful patterns of listening, (4) unhelpful patterns of questioning, (5) increased stress as an outcome of ineffective support, and (6) daughters controlling information as a response to unsatisfying support.

Undermining Daughters' Autonomy

Overwhelmingly, the daughters in this study reported that they felt frustrated by instances (sometimes infrequent, sometime chronic) of their mothers failing to treat them as adults, thereby invalidating their sense of independence and free will. Daughters were eager to view themselves – and to be seen by others – as fully-functioning adults. But many of them reported dissatisfaction with the ways in which mothers' communication served to undermine this goal. Kendall, 22, was a senior communication major who wanted to open her own bakery when she graduated; her mother had mixed feelings about her plan. Kendall voiced her frustration over moments "when my mom tries to control everything. When she tries to overcorrect me. I'm like, 'Mom, why do you always nit-pick at me?' She doesn't

let me blossom." Kendall believed she was at a time in her life when she should be allowed to grow, change, and even fail (the "blossoming" process, as she put it); but her mother's over-involvement and offering of opinions felt stifling to her.

Assistant Manager Nina felt like she was waiting for her mother to catch up to the fact that she had graduated and was living on her own:

> The way it works is I will talk to her about an upcoming decision or what I think about it and she will give me her two cents. It's still from a *parenting mode* though. It's not yet to the point where we're just two adults having a conversation. It's like, "This is the way you need to do it because *you're still my baby girl*." So that's a work in progress.

Even though Nina actively sought her mother's input on decisions, she was less satisfied with their conversations when her mother's communication did not reflect her new adult identity. This mirrored Goldsmith's (2004) notion that communication (and specifically support) is seen to be successful if it effectively attends to the relevant identity concerns of the receiver.

Morgan, mentioned earlier, was in the process of deciding whether she would go to grad school or get a job. Her mother was actively involved in trying to help her decide (mother's vote was grad school). During this time, Morgan struggled with a tension between the way things had always been and the way she wanted them to be as she was getting ready to launch out on her own:

> She means well but sometimes I'm like, "Okay a little less of the helpfulness." She can get so psyched about something that, instead of me holding reins and her sitting next to me, *she'll start to take the reins*. Sometimes, even though she's super excited and she's super happy, she can be a little overbearing and *take a little bit away from*

me. She doesn't mean any of that in a bad way, but it's sometimes like “Ok, dial it down a bit.”

Ultimately Morgan wanted her mother in the passenger seat, involved and contributing. But when her mother attempted to take control away from her (even unknowingly), this made Morgan feel less independent and even less capable.

One element of transitioning into adulthood is the act of moving and settling into a new place, and multiple participants described examples of their mothers wanting to control this process. Courtney, an only child (mentioned previously) who found a job in tech, described a recent time when her mother helped her and her boyfriend move into their new apartment:

> Things aren’t changing as fast as I would like. My mom brought me a lot of stuff when I moved in. My dad and my boyfriend were putting together furniture, and I was helping her decorate and organize the kitchen. There was a lot of friction in that. Like, “I don't want this here, I want it *there*” kind of thing. But she'd be like, “Oh, I don't know, this picture could hang this way” or “I put the glasses in here because I thought it would be easier.” *But I wanted to do it differently*. That's where it materialized.

Similarly, Holly, the sociology grad student who had a strained relationship with her mother, described a similar encounter while furniture shopping with her mother for her and her fiancée’s new home:

> She's passive aggressive, so she'll see something and be like, “Are you really going get *that color*?” or “Are you sure you want to put that *there*?” “I'm sure, I'm sure, I'm 100% sure. Pease leave me alone. Just stop with the comments.” So at that point, because we went with different colors than she would have, and she had

> opinions about all of it, I was like, "No, we picked our colors. This is our apartment. This is our first furniture together." My parents are very generous, which I appreciate so much. We don't have very much money and I have student loans to pay off. They said, "We'll get you a bookshelf and we'll get you couch covers," which I really appreciated. But I was also like, *"This can't come with strings attached."*

Both Courtney and Holly invited their mothers to be a part of the process of decorating their homes. But, when mothers did not respect daughters' desires or choices in this realm, it left daughters feeling less than satisfied with the interactions. Moving into a new place was described by participants as an important and symbolic milestone within the transition. When mothers did not support daughters' creative control in this, daughters felt frustrated.

Heather, a marketing major with an undecided future, spoke of how she and her mother presumably both wanted her to be independent, but there were elements of her mother's behavior that did not seem to validate that:

> I would say that we both want me to be independent. I think we both know that I *can* be independent. But I think *that looks different for the two of us*. *She has a very narrow-minded idea of what I should do,* probably because of what her career path looked like. Part of it is that I don't know what I want to do yet. I think she expected me to know exactly what I was doing and have a job lined up by this point in my senior year. I think she sees that as me not being independent because of that.

According to Heather, because she was not progressing through the markers of the transition as quickly as her mother would have liked, her mother felt she had license to continue to be authoritative. In other words, Heather's mother wanted to see Heather acting like an adult (meeting certain milestones) before she would begin treating her like an adult.

But Heather did not see these things as necessarily related. In her mind, her age and upcoming graduation should matter more than whether or not she had found a job. These differing perceptions caused tensions for this mother-daughter dyad.

Goldsmith's (2004) discussion of identity acknowledgement as related to message success is relevant here. Ideally, when communicating, senders' messages should take into account receivers' roles, their standing, their right to make decisions, their unique strengths, and their values. In providing support, it is ideal for senders to convey acceptance while also not restricting receivers' autonomy in any implied way (Goldsmith, 1992). It is understandable that the mothers described in this study might have struggled in this area because their daughters' identities were newly changing and they may not have adjusted their communication patterns accordingly. But, for daughters, their mothers being cognizant of this shift and carefully reflecting it in their communication was of great importance (as will be discussed in the next section).

Also relevant to this discussion is Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness theory and, embedded within that, Goffman's (1959) concept of face. Face refers to one's desired self-image in social contexts. Within politeness theory, positive face is each person's desire to be liked and appreciated by others; whereas negative face an individual's desire to be viewed and treated as autonomous and competent (Brown & Levinson, 1987). For the participants of this study, when statements from mothers contested daughters' desired identities, appeared to restrict daughters' actions, or implied a limit in competence, these were considered negative face threats. It appeared that the daughters in this study wanted to be seen and treated by their mothers as independent and capable. They also desired freedom to be able to make choices and act in ways that they saw fit. And while daughters reported wanting mothers' input on these matters, they

reported being unsatisfied with conversations where mothers did not attend to their identity needs or were communicating in face-threatening ways.

Preeminence of Mothers' Ideas

Another element that rose to the surface of participants' interviews was their frustration over mothers needing to be right, being absolutely certain they were right, or feeling they had the informational high ground in some way – even (or especially) when the topic of discussion related to some aspect of daughters' lives. According to participants, when mothers acted as though they were unquestionably right – and, conversely that daughters were wrong – this called into question the legitimacy of daughters' ideas and, perhaps by extension, their growing autonomy. For example, Samantha was a 21-year-old senior art major who was raised by a single mother who was still very involved in her life. Their relationship was a mixture of positive and negative features, which Samantha sometimes had difficulty navigating. According to Samantha,

> *She can be relentless in her pursuit of rightness*. *She has to be 100% right.* And I'm like, "You're not." As a kid, when I was growing up, she could kind of pound me into a place of agreeing with her, where she was in the right and I was in the wrong. But now it's like, "I don't see it that way." It's weird for her not to have me in a place where I eventually give in to her viewpoint. I have my own view, and I'm not going to give up on that. So it's kind of weird in that way. She holds her financial obligation over me a lot. I'm looking forward to being financially independent, *so that I won't have to give up my viewpoints on things just because she's threatening to take away financial support.* That's a struggle.

Samantha was happily anticipating graduation, getting a job, and supporting herself, specifically because of how difficult and discouraging this kind of communication was for

her. In her mind, moving on from school (and from mother) represented freedom from this power dynamic. Samantha continues:

> I feel the least supported when I come up with an idea about how I will approach post-grad life, and she's like, "No I don't think that's right." She doesn't have a reason for it. She just tells me that she doesn't think it's right. It makes me feel lost and incapable of making my own decisions. *I feel really unsupported when stuff like that happens.*

Holly, the sociology grad student, had experienced a similar dynamic in her relationship with her mother (who was a therapist) over the years:

> There was just a lot of frustration like, "Ok, you're talking to me like you know more than me, but you don't." It took her a while to be able to acknowledge it, because I think she finds security in being the one who has all the wisdom and gets to be the deliverer of wisdom. I think that there was always this awkwardness of like, "Ok, you're trying to 'therapy me' or whatever, but I already know this stuff." That's been an ongoing process. I wouldn't say it's reconciled yet.

Within these and other participants' narratives, mothers were intent on their ideas winning. Or perhaps they were demonstrating a high need for control. But, in seeking to prevail in this way, they may not have realized that their communication was alienating their daughters. Once again, Goldsmith's (2004) ideas about attending to receivers' identity needs and Brown and Levinson's (1987) thoughts on preserving receivers' negative face come into play here. Perhaps needing to be right, and disallowing any alternative to that, was its own form of invalidation and a distinct challenge to daughters' perceived ability to self-direct their transition and their life.

These findings detailed here highlight the idea that issues of independence were highly salient to daughters during this time of their life. In various ways, daughters were looking to mothers to validate their evolving vision (and enacted version) of themselves. When mothers did not do this, daughters were more frustrated and uncertain.

Unhelpful Patterns of Listening

Daughters described various instances where their mothers were not listening actively or attentively. The associated feelings of disregard or disconnect caused frustration and negative evaluations of the success of those interactions. In the words of Samantha, 21, a senior art major,

> Last finals week, I was breaking down. I was like, "Oh my gosh, what am I doing with my life? I procrastinated this too long. I'm scared. I think I'm going to get one hour of sleep over the next 48 hours, if I'm lucky." And I called her, and I was having a total panic attack on the phone with her, just trying to walk it off, *and she started telling me about all the things that are stressing her out in her business and all the things she's got on her plate.* And I'm just like, "I can't deal with this, Mom." And then I'm getting yelled at. And I'm like, "Can you just please stop yelling at me? *If you can't listen to my stress, then can you just tell me that rather than yelling at me?"*

When stressed, Samantha's initial reaction was to reach out to her mother to vent. But when her mother compared their stressful situations or turned the conversations around to her, Samantha shut down (and, according to her, felt even more stressed). In turning the conversation back to herself in this way, Samantha's mother was exhibiting "conversational narcissism" (Derber, 2000, p. 29); Samantha's tendency to shut down was reflective of research by Vangelisti, Knapp, and Daly (1990) who found that strategies for

coping with this phenomenon included reduced response, disinterest, and taking leave. Similarly, Burleson (1982; 1994) has argued that comforting messages are ineffective when the support provider makes themselves the focus of the issue at hand. Selena, age 22, a first generation college student and senior at a large state university, described a similar pattern wherein her mother took control of the conversation:

> I like to talk to her about things because she's super knowledgeable and she's really helpful, but she doesn't listen very well. When I want to talk about something, it's hard because I can usually get out the beginning of what I want to say, and then she'll talk for about 40 minutes with her response. I want her advice, but I also want to talk to her about whatever it is in more depth. I want her *to hear what I'm saying*. A lot of times it's not that. She's good at understanding what I'm saying, but not good at just listening for a little bit. She has to have a response, and she has to be heard.

Selena wanted and appreciated her mother's advice, but she preferred that her mother listen longer before delivering it. In this case, timing was the main problem. For Marie, age 22, she did not feel like a priority to her mother (nor that her mother cared to weigh in on her decisions), which left her disappointed with their conversations and dissatisfied with her support altogether:

> I just had a conversation like this the other day. It starts with a phone call, me trying to get a hold of her, then waiting a few days and trying again. She says she's going to call back but she doesn't. When I finally *do* get a hold of her, we talk about everything that's happening in the family first. *If I still have time after that*, I'll give her my situation, the thing that I'm needing to make a decision about, and I get usually an "I don't know" response or a "Well, what do you think you should do?"

> response. So I end up saying, “Ok, thank you.” Thanks for not listening. I know she's got my little brother in the background, but very rarely does she actually listen all the way through a conversation. You can tell. You can tell when somebody's distracted on the phone. I don't think she even hears all of what I ask sometimes. And then she gives me “I don't know.” We end up hanging up and I call somebody else, because it's like, “Well, I tried.” I’ll continue trying. I will always try. I will always have blind faith in her, but normally I end up being disappointed.

In addition to not feeling prioritized or heard, Marie also experienced a negative reaction to her mother’s unwillingness to weigh in on her transition experience. This was reflective of Stafford and Canary (1991) and Stafford, Dainton, and Haas (2000) who cited advice giving (specifically, being willing to comment on circumstances and providing opinions when asked) as a relational maintenance behavior. Marie’s mother’s lack of time and attentiveness (labeled as “bad listening” by Marie) and lack of willingness to share her ideas about her daughter’s life, left Marie feeling unsupported. Like Marie, Heather reported that her mother was frequently distracted in the midst of their conversations. Heather loved when her mother came into her room and showcased active listening through her nonverbal displays. Conversely, she felt the following behaviors were unhelpful and counterproductive:

> I can tell when she's thinking of other things. So when I'm trying to have a serious conversation with her and her body is turned away or her eyes are in a different place, stuff like that. She's also very addicted to Facebook. So at the dinner table sometimes she'll just be on her phone, and I'll be like, “Hey mom, can we talk about this?” And she'll be like, “Yeah, honey,” but she doesn’t get off the phone. Eventually I'm like, “Mom, you need to put that thing down.” Sometimes *she just*

> *doesn't get it*, because her mind is in so many different places. That's frustrating for me, and that will make me be like, "Ok, this conversation's going to happen at a different time." We just kind of move on.

When her mother did not convey her full attention, Heather would eventually give up. She said this pattern made her sad and sometimes caused her to cry. Overall, daughters in this study appreciated and felt helped by mothers' time and active listening. Those whose mothers were less engaged in conversation, or took over the conversation too early, evaluated these behaviors as unhelpful and unsatisfying.

Unhelpful Patterns of Questioning

Despite not being asked directly about their mothers' use of questions, many of the women interviewed alluded to this conversational element. Some believed their mothers asked too many questions, which was frustrating to them for various reasons. Conversely, other participants felt their mothers did not ask enough questions, which – to them – implied disinterest on the part of their mothers.

More Questions than Desired

Some daughters claimed their mothers asked too many questions. For individuals like these, who indicated their mothers asked more questions than they desired, in some cases that meant that the questions were (a) overwhelming in number or (b) unpleasant/annoying in nature. In other cases, the presence of too many questions was not viewed as being directly harmful or offensive, (c) they just were not adding anything or benefiting the daughters in any way (neutral, therefore unnecessary, therefore excessive). For example, Mariah, 22, a teacher, stated that her mother asked too many questions throughout the transition, but she did not mind the nature of the questions themselves:

> When I started moving out on my own, she was like, “Okay, where are you moving? What are you doing?” Immediately when I moved in, she was like, "Neighbors. Have you talked to your neighbors? What do they look like?" Or she's like, "What building are you in? Which mailbox? What does it look like? How close are you to work?" *She's asking me all these questions.* She worries because she cares, but sometimes I wish she would worry less. Because when she's worrying, I'm worrying. She's getting older, and people are having strokes early nowadays. For her own mental health and well-being, I need her to calm down with the questions.

Mariah recognized that her mother’s questions were arising from a place of care and concern, but ultimately they were evaluated as unnecessary, unhelpful, and perhaps even stress-inducing. Madeline, 22, a college recruiter, felt that her mother’s questions were excessive as well, but – alternately – believed this was indicative of a lack of attentiveness:

> I think her memory isn't that good. I'll be telling her about something and *she'll ask in different words the same question seven times* and it's frustrating. So I'm just like, “No,” and *every time I explain it, I feel like she's not getting it or not listening or something*. So I just try to avoid that for the most part. I definitely cut the conversation short as much as I can.

For Madeline, the repetition of the questions caused her to feel frustrated because she inferred her mother was not really listening. As such, the number of questions asked (or the number of times a question was asked) became a problem for her, leading to avoidance. Selma (22, an engineer), on the other hand, felt stressed by her mother’s many questions because she did not feel she had the answers yet (or she was unwilling to provide them, due to the anticipated reaction):

> She's always – I don't want to say nosy – but she's always curious *and I take it as nosy*. She always has asked a lot of questions. I think she's just curious about my life but not trying to pry. Sometimes it's just like, "Is your boss nice? Do you like your job? Do you want to stay in it? Is this what you want to do?" *And I just don't have the answer for it yet.* I think she needs to be a little bit more patient when it comes to my job. It'll just stress me out more if you ask me. Also, I've been taking a really long time to move in to my apartment, so she always asks, "Is it clean?" The answer's usually no.

According to Selma, her mother's questions were motivated by interest and concern. But she preferred to process internally first, before communicating about work issues. If she did not feel she had reached a conclusion (or – as with the cleanliness questions – she felt her answer would disappoint her mother), she viewed the questions negatively overall and wished her mother would not ask. Marissa, a 22-year-old senior, reported having a difficult relationship with her mother, and she indicated that her mother's questions were just one of the things that made their long-distance communication complex:

> It's bad in the sense that it's always tense. But we can talk and then about 5 to 20 minutes in, we start disagreeing on something. But we still talk, probably three times a week. When I try to get off the phone, I could literally be Spider Man trying to save people and be like, "Mom, I can't talk right now," and she'll be like, "Yeah okay, and then I was thinking about maybe cutting my hair." And then she just *keeps asking questions*, and it goes on for 20 more minutes, to the point where I have to hang up on her. I don't want to be a disrespectful daughter or rude or anything, but it's ridiculous and it drives me nuts.

Marissa felt her mother lacked awareness. When Marissa needed to get off the phone, to go to work or study, and her mother continued peppering her with questions or discussing mundane details of her own life, Marissa felt frustrated and helpless (to the point where she would simply hang up the phone). In that case, not unlike Madeline, Marissa felt that too many questions was indicative of a lack of communication sensitivity overall. Also not unlike Madeline, Chelsea, 22, a senior, described being frustrated with her mother's repetition of questions, because she felt it indicated a lack of trust that Chelsea could accomplish her transition-related tasks successfully:

> She asks the same question *over and over*. That is my least favorite thing in the world. So she'll be like, "Did you do this?" "Yes, like I'm doing that right now." And then the next day she'll be like, "Well did you do it?" I'm like, "Yes, I'm just waiting for my grade back." And the next day, "Did you get your grade back?" "No, it takes teachers longer than one day to grade something. I'm sorry." It's stuff like that – asking over and over again, even if it's the next step, like "Did this happen? Did this happen? Did this happen?" One of the jobs I was applying to, she kept asking me whether I had applied, over and over again. I was like, "Mom, I'm going to apply when I have a second," because I didn't have a second. And she would respond like, "Well did you hear back from them?" I'm like, "No." And she's like, "Well you should call them." I get it. You want me to call them. I understand. *I want to do it in my own way*. She's not meaning it in any way, and I know that in the back of my mind, *but the way she asks specific questions – that's almost her telling me that she doesn't think that I would do it. It's kind of like dumbing it down for me.*

While their reasons for disliking their mothers' questions may have varied, their desire for fewer questions was aligned. Overall, when daughters believed mothers were asking too many questions, this was evaluated as unhelpful and, oftentimes, negative.

Fewer Questions than Desired

On the flip side of the coin, some daughters expressed a desire for their mothers to show more effort, interest, concern, and involvement by asking more questions about their lives and/or about specific aspects of their transition, such as their job or industry. For these participants, too few questions communicated disinterest or disengagement, even though some attributed this to mothers' potential discomfort with the subject matter (due to lack of experience in some cases). Crystal, 23, a senior who was pursuing a career in social media, wished her mother would show more interest in her job search process by asking more questions:

> When I said, "Hey, I want to apply for this Content Strategist position," she was like, "I don't know what that is." *She doesn't really ask questions when I wish she would, and that's been a struggle for our relationship*. Not that she doesn't care to know, she just has other things that she's worried about. And she knows that I'll be successful and do well so she's like, "Ok, cool, whatever, that's great." If she really wants to know something, she'll ask. *But when it comes to jobs, that's just not something that she asks about.* I would like my mom to talk more and ask more questions. Maybe specifically about job stuff, even if I'm not going to take a particular job.

Crystal described her mother as proud – she did not want to appear to not know something. And because her mother did not attend college herself, and she was unfamiliar with the social media industry, Crystal believed this made her mother insecure about asking

questions or engaging in too much conversation about the transition. However, Crystal was not looking for advice from her mother – she just wanted her mother to be involved in the process and excited for her. Grace, 21, a senior psychology major, also expressed a desire for her mother to ask more questions, but – as described below – she seemed to have grown accustomed to her mother just accepting what Grace told her without probing further:

> Regarding my next chapter, I kind of tell her the amount that I would tell a friend, not like a good friend, but a friend. Like, "Hey I got an interview." Literally that's all I would say. And then she wouldn't actually ask any more questions, so I wouldn't go into anymore.

Because Grace had recognized that her mother generally did not probe her with follow-up questions, she kept her conversations about the transition short and to the point, giving basic information without elaboration. She wished things were different, but her expectations had already been set for these types of interactions. Holly, 23, a sociology grad student, acknowledged that her mother kept her questions at a relatively surface level, but she had given up any expectation of that changing because, as described in other sections of her interview, that was what she had been used to since childhood:

> When I was trying to decide something, I largely did that myself and would just inform them afterwards. Like, "I think I'm going to apply to grad school," and they were just like, "Ok, cool." And then I would be like, "I'm interviewing at this place," and they were like, "Ok, cool." And then I got in, and I was like, "I'm going to grad school," and they were like, "Ok, cool." Now, when we talk, they're like, "Oh how's graduate school? How are your classes going?" So they do ask. I think it's their way of wanting to go deeper but not being comfortable asking the questions they really want to know the answers to. *But, at this point, I don't necessarily want*

to have some kind of emotionally deep, contemplative dialogue with them. It's a little late for that.

Holly was unsatisfied with the state of her relationship with her mother, in large part because of her mother's lack of involvement during her teenage and college years. She would have preferred that her mother show more care and concern through conversation and questions, but, according to Holly, the norms had been set and neither party was willing to directly address the issue.

While some daughters, like Crystal, wished their mother asked more questions about their work, Nina, 22, actually desired for her mother to show direct interest in her new social network that she was building, as well as her romantic relationship:

> I wish she was a little bit more invested in the specifics of my deep friendships and deep relationships. I know that she's like, "Oh that's good that you have good friends." But sometimes she doesn't ask, "Well what are you talking about? What's that like?" It'll just be like, "What did y'all do? Oh that's fun" Not necessarily "How is it? Is she being a good friend to you?" Unless there's a conflict or something, she doesn't really dive into the specifics. And that goes too with romantic relationships too. She's like, "Oh you have a boyfriend, that's so great, glad you guys are going on date night." But his parents are like, "Tell me about your life, tell me about your church that you're joining, and your friend group" and stuff like that. *Sometimes things that are super in-depth for me are just not as in-depth for her.*

Even though Nina and her mother were close, and her mother kept up with her activities, the type and/or depth of the questions being asked was not fully satisfying to Nina. She wanted to take the conversation deeper and wished her mother would mirror that by asking probing questions. For her, her new friendships and the state of her long-distance romantic

relationship were an important aspect of her transition. While she described her mother as being highly affirming and confident in her abilities, she cited this issue (i.e., lack of substantive questions about her interpersonal relationships) as her one source of dissatisfaction with her relationship with her mother.

Lastly, according to Sara, 23, who worked in political communication, her mother did not ask many questions about her hobbies or the industry in which she worked. She wished her mother would showcase more interest in these areas, but she acknowledged that there may be several reasons for the lack of questions:

> Before I got this job, I had actually done quite a lot of blogging and vlogging about politics. But my mom has never really been like, "How's this going?" I wouldn't even ask for technical questions, but just "How's this going?" would be nice. It feels like disinterest. And I think it's because – I don't want to sound condescending – but I think it's because she doesn't understand it. So she doesn't really have bandwidth for that. But it would be cool if she asked about work. This could go back to a lack of interest in my industry. Or maybe she's afraid that I'll be like [growling noise] if she asks me a question. Which I wouldn't be, but I think that she may think that I'm not approachable about some things. Which is one of my own weaknesses.

Without being prompted, these daughters and others described mothers' lack of questions as something they found unhelpful and unsupportive. While too many questions felt stifling or disempowering, too few questions made daughters feel that their mothers were uninterested or were not making an effort to be involved in their transition or their job/industry of choice. According to participants, the questions themselves did not need to

be perfectly formulated; instead, the meaning behind the questions (mothers' interest) and the results of the questions (more dialogue) were what was significant.

In uncovering daughters' views that both too many and too few questions were unhelpful, this may imply the existence of a dilemma for support providers. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) examined a different, but perhaps parallel, set of dilemmas experienced by advice givers who (a) must evaluate whether their advice will be perceived as caring or butting in; and (b) must decide whether to provide honest feedback or supportive (agreement-oriented) feedback (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Perhaps a related dilemma was experienced by these questioners (mothers). Hypothetically, mothers may have evaluated their questions as being helpful and caring (a good thing), which could have prompted them to ask more than daughters desire. Likewise, mothers may have been afraid of butting in (a bad thing), which could have led them to ask fewer questions than daughters would have liked. Mothers may also have been conflicted about whether they should ask hard questions (honest) or softball questions (supportive/agreeing). In Goldsmith and Fitch's (1997) study, advice receivers also faced a dilemma – they were torn between showing gratitude and respect for the advice/advice provider, and retaining their right to make their own decisions. It is conceivable that daughters in this study were navigating how to politely (appreciatively) respond to questions while also holding into their ability to control information and decisions.

Overall, the daughters in this study interpreted their mothers' requests for information in more or less positive ways depending on the amount and type of questions being asked. This reflected findings by Braithwaite (1991), Bute (2009), and Donovan-Kicken, Bute, Richardson, & Zaitchik (2011) which have indicated that targets of questions may interpret said questions in varied ways based on their attributions of the questioners'

motives and behaviors. According to Donovan-Kicken et al. (2011), intrusive questions may be perceived as conveying (or motivated by) disagreement or judgment on the part of the questioner; conversely, such questions may be seen to indicate or originate from care or curiosity, which could be viewed as less harmful by the receiver.

Outcome: Increased Stress

For many daughters in this study, difficulties in mother-daughter communication or a lack of helpful support from mothers led to increased levels of stress during the transition. According to Morgan, 20, a senior graduating early, the results of her interactions with her mother were mixed:

> It can go both ways. Sometimes talking to her really helps with the stress I'm under. But there are other times where she can definitely *add* to the stress. Like with her wanting me to get a Master's and a PhD. She can sometimes add stress because she may mention things I need to consider which I wasn't thinking about. And now I'm like, "Crap, I guess I need to think about that." She never means anything malicious by it. *But now I have more things I need to think about.*

Morgan said there were times when she liked talking to her mother about the transition, but in bringing up all of the angles and potential outcomes, her mother was also increasing Morgan's mental to-do list, which made her feel overwhelmed. This was reflective of work by Brashers et al. (2004) who found that support providers can interfere with receivers' uncertainty management. Support recipients like Morgan, who reported both positive and negative outcomes, had to manage the costs and benefits of this mixed support. Similarly, Samantha, 21, an art student, described her mother as motivating her but also prompting stress:

> Seeing what she does gives me motivation. My mom is working so hard for me to be here, so I don't want to mess around. *But sometimes this turns into stress*. *Like "I can't let my mom down." I want to live up to her expectations.* Like if I try wedding photography in Portland and it's not working out, she might be like, "See I told you, you should have done X, Y, and Z."

In one way, Samantha felt supported by her mother because she was helping her financially. But at the same time, the financial constraints her mother was under weighed heavily on Samantha's mind, causing her to be highly stressed about school and grades. Additionally, her mother had a certain path she wanted Samantha to follow and Samantha hated the thought of disappointing her. Finally, Heather, 21, described her mother's style of planning as highly stressful to her. Because of the stress it added, Heather had begun avoiding conversations about the transition with her mother:

> She, more so than me, has to have a plan, needs the structure, needs to know what's going to happen. So I think if she were to know more details about how all over the place I am right now, she'd be like, "Oh my gosh, you need to figure out what you're doing." And it would open the door for her to be like, "This is what you need to do. Stop thinking about all those other things. Here's the plan," *which just adds so much pressure to all the other things I'm trying to figure out right now.*

Heather was still deciding what kinds of jobs she wanted to pursue after college. She reported feeling anxious anytime her mother asked about the job search, because she knew her mother had specific ideas about what she should do, and she was likely to try to take control if she felt Heather was not doing what she should to find work. The unknowns of the future were very stressful to Heather, but her mother's handling of that made the whole situation even more mentally and emotionally taxing.

Outcome: Daughters Controlling Information

A noticeable trend that arose during interviews related to daughters' choices to withhold information and/or delay communicating about certain aspects of their transition. In most cases this was either to prevent mothers from worrying (which in turn prevented daughters from being negatively impacted by mothers' worry) or to wait until things had settled or been decided before sharing with mothers. In both scenarios, this served to circumvent the anticipated pattern of mothers overstepping boundaries and challenging daughters' independence. In the majority of instances, daughters' withholding information or delaying transmitting information was a function of either reducing their own stress levels or preserving personal agency in matters relating to their transition. In sum, daughters reported controlling information to protect their own independence.

When it comes to the topic of controlling information, several theoretical frameworks are of relevance. First, as is reflected in the narratives below, topic avoidance was utilized as a means of limiting mothers' knowledge and therefore involvement. This concept can be broadly defined as the purposeful evasion of communication relating to a certain issue (Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 2000). According to Dailey and Palomares (2004), topic avoidance is "a goal-oriented communicative behavior whereby individuals strategically try to keep a conversation away from certain foci" (p. 472). One reason for topic avoidance, which is particularly relevant to the descriptions below, is self-protection, or the desire to evade criticism or the threat of vulnerability (Afifi & Guerrero, 1995). Another framework relevant to the current discussion is communication privacy management theory (Petronio, 1991, 2000, 2002) which argues that individuals maintain privacy boundaries with various relational partners based on perceived benefits and costs of disclosure. As explored in greater detail below, the women in this study described

making thoughtful, strategic choices about what to conceal from mothers based on the relationships and their unique goals.

Avoiding Mothers' Worry and Involvement

The daughters in this study reported that mothers' worry affected them. Worry caused mothers to ask questions and get further involved in situations than daughters desired; as such, withholding information served to prevent additional stress on daughters. According to Selena, one of the first generation college students mentioned earlier,

> It's definitely helpful *to just not say anything*. I don't think she is ready to know everything that I know or do or think. She has a pretty set idea of who I am. And it's not that it's super far off-base, but it'll make her worry and it'll stress her out, *and she takes out that stress on me, my sister, and my dad.* She's pretty predictable in that way. I already know what she's going to say. I know how she's going to act, so I don't need to talk about it anymore. Sometimes it's frustrating because I do want to tell her everything. I'm hoping one day we reach that point, but today is not that day.

In Selena's case, when her mother felt stressed, her behavior was predictable and somewhat negative. In avoiding communication with her mother about certain subjects relating to her own life, Selena believed she was protecting herself (and her family) from the negative effects of her mother's worry and stress. Even though in her words, she felt bad "hiding" things from her mother, she believed the end goal was good and, because of that, the concealment was warranted. Another participant, Leah, age 22, was a senior horticulture major at a large state school. She described her mother as supportive but also a "worry wart" who wanted to know all the details of Leah's life:

> She worries about me taking 17 hours. I used to tell her when I had deadlines, but I've kind of strayed away from letting her know when I have big exams because she'll be worried. *It sounds bad, but I don't want her to be worried because that will make me worry if she's worried. So, for my own good, I've just kind of backed off.* If she does ask me when the next test or paper is, I'll let her know. But I try not to. It's just easier.

For Leah, avoiding certain questions or discussions was a matter of ease and efficiency. It allowed her to continue focusing on her studies and on graduating and finding a job. Even though she loved and felt close to her mother, she controlled information to protect her time and her own stress levels.

In all of these cases, it was not that daughters were not sharing things with their mothers, but rather they were selective about what and how much they shared. For instance, Sara, age 23, worked for a political communication firm in D.C., several states away from her parents who lived in the Midwest. She talked to her mother regularly but actively managed which topics they discussed in depth:

> I hesitate telling her things when it comes to boys. I hesitate giving her too much information because then she's like, "Well how is so-and-so? What does he do? What's his family like?" Sometimes I just don't want that from my mom. *Her questions stress me out.* I don't want to have to give her all these updates. *So I try to control how much information I give her so that she's not prying.*

Like Sara, Kayla (previously mentioned) withheld details of her dating life from her mother because she and her mother had different ideas about what her romantic relationships should look like:

> I avoid telling my mom about guys and stuff like that. *Because, for one, I don't want her to worry. And two, I don't want the lecture.* I try to shield her from that. And even then, she'll ask, "What's happening?" And I'm like, "Nothing here to tell!" She still considers me her little baby and, when it comes to stuff like that, she wants to shield me from the world, to keep me suppressed. She wants me to remain her cute, little, innocent, youngest daughter. You never want to disappoint your parents, especially your mom, so it's hard. She treats me as an adult in every other aspect except for that one.

Because Kayla and her mother maintained different views of who Kayla was and what her moral values were or should be, controlling this information had functional benefits in that she could avoid her mother's disapproval and lectures on her behavior. Finally, Marissa, a senior communication major, decided to withhold the fact that she was getting a dog to prevent her mother's displeasure and subsequent meddling:

> I haven't told her I'm going to get a dog when I graduate because I know it's going to be a stupid fight and she's going to think it's really dumb and irresponsible. But, trust me, I've thought about this a lot. I've weighed everything. I also haven't talked to her about not knowing how to pay for grad school because my plan is just to figure it out. Those are the things that I avoid completely. I also avoid talking about what I'm studying because she doesn't really understand it. I don't want to get into it because I know the conversation's going to go: *"How are you going to get a job with that?"*

Marissa had carefully considered the issue of getting a dog and believed her choice was valid and even wise; however, she did not think her mother would agree or notice/value the time she took in arriving at this decision. Because her mother's disapproval was not

going to prevent her from getting a dog, she felt it was better to simply avoid the seemingly pointless conflict over the issue. Conversely, because her mother was somewhat incredulous and disapproving towards her educational choices (despite Marissa being very passionate about what she studied), she found it functional to just evade the conversation altogether.

As described in their own words, these women were actively managing the privacy boundaries between them and their mothers through use of topic avoidance. For most of them, their motivation was self-protection (Afifi & Guerrero, 1995) – perhaps to avoid mothers' criticism, a lecture, a pointless argument, additional questions, or even residual stress (in other words, when their mothers worried or felt stressed about something, it caused them to be worried or stressed in turn). In part, the strategic privacy management reflected the concept of protective buffering (Coyne & Smith, 1991, 1994) which is the act of strategically shielding a relational partner from information one believes may increase their partner's worry or stress (Afifi, Hutchinson, & Krouse, 2006). For the women in this study, carefully controlling information (through topic avoidance) was an act protective buffering – an attempt to keep mothers from worrying about events in daughters' lives. Interestingly, protective buffering is often assumed to be altruistically-motivated, designed primarily to help the person being protected from information. However, in the case of these daughters, buffering also served to protect themselves, because when mothers were stressed, daughters felt stressed. As such, there was a level of other-centered buffering with the ultimate goal of personal buffering, which would be an interesting area to explore in further studies.

Waiting Until Things are Settled

Daughters engaged in topic avoidance as a means of escaping potentially unpleasant interactions with mothers in relation to certain transition-relevant subjects. In these cases, topic avoidance was permanent or chronic. However, in contrast to this, some daughters chose to wait to reveal information to their mothers until things had been completely decided or settled. This form of topic avoidance seemed to be motivated by daughters' belief that their course of action, or perhaps their decision-making process, would be made easier, less stressful, or more efficient in various ways without mothers' initial involvement.

Like a few others mentioned previously, Courtney purposefully withheld information from her mother regarding her romantic relationship – at least temporarily. While romantic relationships may not be a universal part of the transition from college to career, quite a few of the women interviewed felt like their relationships with their partners were a clear part of the transition – whether it related to making location-based plans with them, moving in with them, or simply protecting the relationship from the interference of parents. Additionally, mothers did not appear to differentiate which parts of daughters' transition to become involved with – whether job, location, money, or romantic partner. According to Courtney, an only child and a graduate working in tech,

> My boyfriend and I have been dating for almost two years now and, at the time that we decided to live together, it was a little earlier than I would have told my mom. I held that information until it was closer to the time when it could be finalized. I waited because I didn't know where I was going to be, and I didn't want to freak them out or make them worry. I wanted to have a final plan. If I told them, "I'm thinking about this" or "I'm thinking about that," they would just come back with

> questions. That's part of the reason I wanted to be on my own, because I'm just tired of constantly being watched over. So, in bringing something up, if I knew there was going to be a lot of questions around it, *I waited until I had a final plan.*

Courtney continued, this time in relation to work:

> If I thought that they were going to view something as bad news, I waited to reveal it. If I had a job interview but hadn't heard back, I would wait to say anything. Basically, *if there wasn't a concrete decision or plan, I didn't reveal as much*. Because if I tried to figure that stuff out with my parents, especially my mom, there would just be a lot of questions and it would take a lot of time. Why bother them with that? *If I didn't have a concrete answer, we wouldn't get anywhere anyway.*

Courtney felt close to and supported by her parents and she liked them to be involved in her life. However, she wanted to be able to make decisions relating to her transition with her boyfriend alone, without any interference from her parents (who were not fully comfortable with her moving in with him). Also, as an only child, Courtney's mother was very focused on her and emotionally invested in her (this also manifested in a large number of questions); to avoid (a) getting her mother's hopes up needlessly and (b) spending a lot of time answering questions, she chose to avoid for a time, but revealed when everything had been settled. Selma, first year engineer, echoed similar strategies:

> I still feel like I'm in the early stages of my job, which means I don't know the exact direction it's going or exactly what I want from it yet. I'm in this limbo stage of just taking things in. The most I ever I tell my mom is, "Yes, it's going well. Yes I enjoy it. My boss is great." I'll tell her how I feel and if I'm happy. But I'll only tell her specifics *after I've taken stuff in and made a conclusion. I just don't want anything to be misinterpreted or any assumptions to be made until it's finalized.* Based on

> my experience, my mom can take something that's up in the air and run with it and form her own conclusions. She often jumps to the worst-case scenario. I do this for the sake of efficiency but also so she doesn't worry about things. She'll form her own opinions and conclusions too soon and, when she worries, she'll start to scold me prematurely. Not only do I not want her to worry, but I also don't want to get in trouble before I deserve to be punished or whatever.

Selma was independent and ultimately liked to sort things out in her own mind before seeking outside counsel. This made her feel more protected because she saw her mother often jumping too quickly too conclusions.

Finally, Heather, whose mother was not quite on the same page about what her future should look like, described her experience in this area:

> There's a lot that I don't talk to my mom about. The stuff that I *know* and that I've planned out, I will definitely talk to her about. When I registered for classes for my last semester, I was immediately ok talking to her about that *because it was figured out. It was planned.* I was totally okay with being like, "Hey, I'm taking these classes next semester." But the stuff that I'm unsure of – like what I'm doing in May – I don't talk about and I hope that she won't bring it up. I know that's a really toxic thing, but that's the point we've come to.

Heather was more than happy to discuss more immediate, settled matters; in fact, she enjoyed these kinds of conversations with her mother. But, conversely, conversations about her job prospects (which were not finalized) were a source of great stress to her. As such, she actively avoided the topic, but looked forward to being able to talk to her mother about her job once she found one.

In line with the previous section, daughters engaged in topic avoidance as a means of managing their privacy boundaries and protecting themselves or their time. The difference was that these daughters were strategically waiting to reveal, rather than completely avoiding, meaning the underlying motivations of daughters in each camp may have been different. Additionally, when navigating issues of when to share (as with what to share), the dialectical tension between openness and closeness is relevant (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996).

In sum, according to the accounts of the women interviewed, communication with mothers during the transition contained unavoidable complexities and nuances, in large part due to issues relating to daughters' changing identity. This was not unexpected light of Fisher's (2004) claims that the transition to adulthood is a key turning point for the mother-daughter relationship. It also echoed Fingerman's (2001) assertion that both daughters' and mothers' role functions become less clear-cut during daughters' transition to adulthood.

Summary

Overall, daughters reported dissatisfaction with communication that served to downplay or decrease their own autonomy. They also reported frustrations about mothers not listening well, asking too many questions (communicating over-involvement), or asking too few questions (communicating under-involvement). As a result of these interactions, daughters felt more stressed about the transition and sought to moderate mothers' involvement by controlling information.

EFFECTIVE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION (AND OUTCOMES) DURING THE TRANSITION

In examining daughters' evaluations of mothers' helpful responses during the transition, daughters reported that when mothers affirmed their independence, championed them, and listened actively and with an open mind, this was perceived as helpful and satisfying. Daughters also appreciated when mothers asked questions which felt affirming (showcasing care for daughter) or questions that helped daughters process their own ideas. Positive behaviors like these served to bolster daughters and make them feel anchored. The themes explored in the following sections relate to (1) mothers encouraging daughters' autonomy, (2) mothers acting as a confident cheerleader, (3) helpful patterns of listening, (4) helpful patterns of questioning, (5) decreased stress and (6) increased confidence and efficacy, and (7) daughters feeling anchored.

Encouraging Daughters' Autonomy

In contrast to the previous sections, participants described instances where their mothers provided affirmation of their newly burgeoning independence, which was clearly appreciated. Overall, the daughters in this study who seemed most satisfied with how their mothers had handled their transition were those whose mothers had treated them as self-determining adults and respected their choices. Kristen, age 23, a recent grad who worked in the insurance industry, described how her mother's communication with her had evolved over time, in ways she viewed as positive:

> I've always been really independent and sometimes I just make a decision on my own. Like "Hey, this is what I'm doing, what do you think?" She doesn't usually come to me and say, "Hey, this is what you should do" — at least not so much anymore. An example was a couple of weeks ago when I put in my two weeks' notice. I was really nervous because I had never done that before. I was thinking of

> emailing so I would have written documentation. She was like, “Yeah, I think that's a good idea because you want documentation.” Especially as I've gotten older, *if I have a different opinion than she does on something, she's more understanding about my opinion or what I've decided, even if she sees a different route because we're different people.*

Kristen appreciated when her mother affirmed her choices. Even when her mother did not fully agree, her mother accepted that they were adults who could form different opinions on things. Kristen expressed how happy she was about the shift that she had seen in the last year or so, which had led her to feel more satisfied in the relationship.

Mariah, a teacher who lived far from home, had also noticed her mother’s change in approach:

> After I do *adultish* things, she'll go, “Well look, you're a grown woman now." And I'm like, “Okay, that's cool!” *She embraces that and acknowledges that now.* Even when we went to Vegas, I had a drink with her, and I was like, “Oh my gosh, this is weird.” But she was like, “You're fine!” Whenever we talk about work, I feel like it’s an adult-type moment.

Mariah benefited from her mother’s acknowledgement and encouragement of her doing and succeeding at so-called “adultish” things. This made her feel confident and empowered to continue pursuing her goals, because she knew she had her mother’s backing and confidence.

Brooke, the YouTube influencer, was extremely happy about the positive changes she had been experiencing in the last year in relation to her mother acknowledging her independence (and communicating in new ways because of it):

> She's opened up to me, more like a friend than a mom. Like, "Listen, I want to tell you these things that have been happening that I didn't want to tell you when you lived at home." I've definitely seen a change in her trusting me with finances and family secrets since I'm graduating and becoming an adult. *She's put more responsibility on me, and I feel like she is starting to look at me like, "Okay she's an adult now, she can handle this."* I've appreciated that. I feel like the transition has brought us closer because she trusts me with more now. I feel like she's saying, "My daughter is an adult, and I can talk to her about the serious stuff. I don't have to pay her bills anymore. She's got this. So I can talk to her about these important issues, or these adult-life things" It's created more serious, in-depth, adult conversations.

Like Mariah, Brooke felt empowered and bolstered by her mother's view of her as [more of] an equal. She could see, in very practical ways, how their communication was changing and growing because of it. This reflected research by Donovan et al. (2017) who found that when parents demonstrated openness with their emerging adult children (sharing information, being candid, treating the child as a peer), emerging adults reported greater satisfaction with those conversations and increased feelings of closeness with their parents.

Likewise, Natalie believed her mother was, at long last, starting to treat her like a fully-functioning adult. In fact, Natalie felt her transition experience went very smoothly and she believed her mother's positive handling of that was key:

> I think it's the way she speaks to me about these things – she's not pushy. *She gives me independence and wants me to come to her with anything.* The way that she's an open arms kind of person has made me feel very in control of the situation.

Similarly, Stephanie, age 21, was a senior communication major who was hoping to spread her wings and move far from home after graduation. She referenced her mother's encouragement of this: "She fully supports my independence. She'll always tell me, 'Go wherever. Do whatever. As long as you can actually survive.'" For both Natalie and Stephanie, their mothers championed their independence, which gave them more confidence in transitioning and moving on into new realms.

All in all, daughters who gave examples of mothers affirming their independence in these ways were in the minority. But it was clear that they truly appreciated these behaviors by their mothers, and it contributed to a more optimistic feeling towards the transition itself. Overall, validating mothers appeared to bolster daughters' confidence and help with daughters' successful navigation of the transition experience.

Mother as a Confident Cheerleader

The daughters in this study described highly positive reactions to mothers' expressions of unconditional support – messages which communicated that mothers were fully behind their daughters, excited, and cheering them on, no matter what path daughters chose to take or what the outcome. While daughters felt discouraged and disempowered by messages aimed at persuading them to do what their mothers thought was best, daughters loved when mothers took on the role of confident cheerleader. In this role, mothers expressed positivity and excitement about the transition and daughters' moments of success therein. But, additionally, these mothers communicated to their daughters that, no matter how things went in the next stage of life (success or failure), daughters would be ok and they would bounce back. According to daughters, when mothers acted as their cheerleader – someone who was excited for them and believed in them – daughters felt freedom to make big choices and take risks, all while knowing their mothers were 100%

behind them, for better or for worse. Daughters emphasized how helpful, supportive, and empowering they found these types of messages during this transition, which encouraged them to put away their fear of failing, disappointing mothers, or incurring relational damage by not following mothers' wishes. According to Daniela, age 20, who was graduating early and going to law school:

> She's like, "I believe in you. I knew from the time you were born that you were going to change the world. You're my daughter – if these are all the things *I* can do, imagine what you can do." She has no college education, no high school education, but she owns her own real estate company. So I know if she can do that and *she believes in me*, then I can do even more.

For Daniela, her mother's confidence in her, as well as her example, gave her a sense of reassurance as she faced the unknowns of the future. For those like Daniela, mothers' expressions of excitement and faith in them were evaluated as a significantly positive force in their transition. This theme linked closely with the concept of esteem support, or "social support that is intended to enhance how another person feels about him or herself and his or her attributes, abilities, and accomplishments" (Holmstrom, 2015, p. 282). When events occur which threaten self-esteem, this kind of support is effective, particularly when it focuses on emotional reappraisals (Holmstrom, 2012; Holmstrom & Burleson, 2011; Holmstrom & Kim, 2015). For daughters searching for jobs and subsequently acclimating to new jobs, self-esteem was negatively impacted by various perceived failures (not getting call-backs after interviews, mistakes at work, etc.). As such, it is understandable why the daughters in this study reported feeling bolstered by esteem support from mothers.

"I'm Excited for You"

The daughters in this study reported being bolstered by mothers' expressions of excitement surrounding their transition events. This included positivity toward the transition itself (tasks, small milestones, potential options) or feelings of joy and celebration when daughters' plans fell into place. Such support is defined as celebratory support (McCullough & Burleson, 2012), or the "verbal and nonverbal signals a support provider uses to acknowledge, extol, and appreciate the significance of an event that has been interpreted as a good thing by the support recipient" (McCullough, 2010, p. 18). According to Kayla, age 21,

> As far as the transition and looking for jobs, she's the first person I talk to about things. She's always super excited for me. She's like, "Oh my gosh, it's so exciting! I'm so happy you're getting your fingers and toes into everything!" She's the first person I tell, and she's more supportive than anyone else in my life.

Kayla indicated that her mother's positive responses made her feel more confident in the job search process, but it also helped her to feel closer to mother (which is why her mother was one of the first people she went to with news). Leah, age 22, echoed Kayla's experience:

> Since I'm in horticulture and I do a lot of floral arrangements, I'll always send her pictures of the arrangements and she's always like, "Oh my gosh!" She loves seeing them, and she loves to hear me talk about the events I've helped coordinate or volunteered at. *Even the littlest things*, she'll just send me a text. And if I send her a picture of the arrangement or a picture of the event space, she's just so excited to hear all about it. She loves knowing that I'm happy doing what I love. She can see that I'm happy doing it. And that makes her super, super excited.

Leah's mother celebrated her work and her triumphs, big or small. In Leah's view, having this sort of cheerleader in her corner made her feel encouraged and loved. Likewise, Brooke, 22, who was seeing success as a beauty blogger, said this about the excitement her mother showed on her behalf:

> Last semester was the first time a big brand contacted me. It's one of my favorite brands and I called her right away and was like, "You won't believe who just emailed me." And she was *so excited* and *so happy* for me. She was so excited, she went out that night and bought everything on the shelf so she could use everything because I was doing a little video with all the products. She was just, "I want to follow along, I want to do exactly what you're doing." That was pretty cool. It feels great because she's so excited, and I know I'm making her happy. And she's like, "You're doing this and you're killing it and you're really progressing in your career." She's just so supportive of that and happy for me.

Brooke sensed her mother's genuine joy in response to her hard work and accomplishments. Her mother also showcased a desire to be involved as much as she could, which made Brooke feel validated in her pursuits. Mariah also felt this type of support from her mother. She vividly recalled the moment she called her mother to tell her she had gotten a job:

> When I got the call that I received my job, my mom couldn't even think! She was at her job and she had to go into another room because she was so happy she started shouting! She started crying, "Oh, your sister, call her! Call everybody!" She was crying because she was so happy. Hearing her cry makes me cry, tears of happiness. It was a joyous conversation. She's really excited when things like this happen. Her words of affirmation through a phone call and actually *hearing the excitement in*

her voice gets me excited and makes me feel confident. It's like you're doing right in the end, to somebody at least. She always says, "I'm proud of you, I'm proud of you, I'm proud of you."

For Mariah, her mother's care and commitment to her was showcased, in part, through her enthusiastic, genuine displays of happiness for her. Mariah's success in landing a job was made even more meaningful by how excited her mother was about the news. For daughters like Kayla, Leah, Brooke, Mariah, and others, their mothers' excitement on their behalf was a palpable, positive part of their transition experience. When mothers showed excitement (free of disapproval or personal agendas), daughters felt supported.

"I Have Faith in You"

While daughters enjoyed and appreciated when mothers showed excitement for them, what was perhaps even more meaningful, according to participants, was when mothers indicated to daughters that, no matter what happened, they were ultimately going to be fine – meaning mothers believed daughters possessed the capabilities and personal resources to take risks and to bounce back if those risks did not pay off. The daughters quoted below, and those like them, felt that their mothers had faith in them and trusted their abilities as adults. These mothers communicated that, for better or for worse, these daughters would eventually land on their feet. In the words of Natalie, 23, who had landed a job in marketing,

> Right after I graduated, I had applied to jobs in Lubbock and I had an offer that I wasn't sure about it. It wasn't everything I wanted, and I really wanted to be in Lubbock at the time, but I didn't want to take the job *just to be in Lubbock*. That conversation was one of the best that we'd had about this situation because she told me, "Whatever you choose, we're obviously here to support you no matter what,

> but there is no wrong decision. You'll learn from every yes or no, and there is no wrong way to go about it. Either way, you're going to learn and we're always here to support you." That was the best conversation. It made me feel a sense of relief, knowing that even if it wasn't going to be the best decision for me, it was still a learning, it was a lesson, and she was going to be there no matter what.

In framing the situation in this way, Natalie's mother communicated to her she did not need to be so worried about making the right choice, but rather that any choice was going to be a valuable learning experience. This helped to reduce some of Natalie's anxiety, and made her realize that her mother would be fully behind her, believing in her, no matter what her choice or its outcomes. Similarly, Vanessa, age 22, a fashion merchandizing major, said her mother helped her to realize that it was safe to make mistakes:

> She says, "I want you to live a happy life. I want you to work hard and enjoy what you do. We're very supportive and have your back." That's so encouraging. She just wants the best for me. It means a lot knowing that she's such a great support system and I have her alongside with me, even when I make mistakes. When times are great, when times are bad. I'll have her right there *cheering me on*.

For Vanessa, it was important to know that, whether she stayed close to home or moved far away, her mother believed in her capabilities and had Vanessa's best interests at heart. Likewise, Claire, 22, felt strengthened by the unconditional acceptance and care her mother communicated despite the uncertainties that were ahead:

> I like when she's offering support in a hypothetical way. Like, "No matter what you choose to do, we'll be there to support you," whether it's emotionally or financially, if I were to need anything that I wasn't able to come up with on my own. Those are the times when I feel the most comforted and supported, when she's literally

> offering *that*. A lot of times I almost feel obligated to stay close to home, so I think the best conversations are when she says, “Hey you can go anywhere” and gives me that permission. Or if I'm feeling apprehensive about grad school, and she's like, “Hey worst case scenario, you have a master's degree.” She's really just straightforward about that kind of stuff, which is good.

Even if Claire’s plans failed, or she made a move that did not pay off (like grad school), her mother had made that seem less scary, from both a logistical and a symbolic standpoint. In doing so, she allowed Claire to feel more comfortable taking risks. For Nina and Sierra, their mothers communicated with them in ways that demonstrated faith in their intelligence, knowledge, and capabilities. These mothers believed their daughters had what it took to succeed or to keep moving forward even in the face of difficulty or failure. In the words of Nina, 22, an assistant manager:

> Words of affirmation are huge for me. It's very easy for her to just say, “You are so good at this, you are so beautiful, *you are so strong in areas x, y, z, and it doesn't matter what you do today. Tomorrow is a new day*.” She's very encouraging. If it's work, and I say, “This sucks, I hate my job, I hate my boss, I don't like anyone I work with, this is miserable to wake up to everyday,” she knows exactly how to respond as it applies to each scenario. With that, she would say something like, “You are so strong and so capable, you got a really good education, and you had amazing professors that taught you how to talk to people, and *you can use those skills* when you talk to your boss,” and maybe that will make it a little easier.

Likewise, Sierra, age 22, a new grad student, described her experience as follows:

> It doesn't matter what I'm doing. It doesn't matter where I am. She is like, “I know you are a smart girl. You are wise beyond your years. So I'm going to respect you

by allowing you to make these decisions *with me be behind you at full force*." She's always been consistent in that aspect. It doesn't matter what I'm doing. She's always supporting me, even if I'm doubting myself. She reminds me what I've done, where I'm going, who I am.

For Nina and Sierra, their mothers communicated their faith in them by reminding them of their talents, skills, inner strength, and sense of personal identity. For these mothers and others, they were not just communicating to their daughters that (a) you are going to do great or (b) I will love you no matter what; but rather that you can make it work, you will find your path, because I have faith that you are a competent person. Daughters indicated that this faith their mothers had in them gave them confidence to explore the unknown and take risks because, ultimately, their mothers trusted they could bounce back from the outcomes of any of their choices.

Overall, conversations expressing excitement for daughters or faith in daughters were labeled as "best" or "my favorite" or "the most meaningful" by participants. According to some, these were the conversations they remembered and relied upon when faced with new challenges and decisions. This illustrated the notion that, in expressing excitement and unconditional acceptance, mothers were helping daughters to reappraise their transition as less uncertain and scary, and their personal/interpersonal resources as sufficient, thereby ostensibly reducing stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Helpful Patterns of Listening

In examining the perspectives of the women interviewed in this study and analyzing their perceptions of mothers' most and least supportive behaviors, there emerged a consensus amongst these daughters relating to the importance of mothers' listening behaviors as a successful feature of support. Daughters felt supported by mothers who

listened well (attentively, openly) and unsupported by those who were less patient or more distracted. As illustrated by the participant accounts below, daughters evaluated their communication interactions with mothers as noticeably more successful and more meaningful when mothers showed their attention, immediacy, and care both verbally and nonverbally. In regards to listening behaviors daughters labeled as positive, Paige – a 22 year old senior and hopeful entrepreneur – said:

> I call her first. For sure. Because I know that *she's just going to listen* at first. She's not going to push me to think about anything. I get to say everything that's on my mind and then move forward, rather than her trying to find a solution to every little thing that I say, right away.

Paige valued her mother's patient approach because it allowed her to process more fully, both from a venting and decision-making standpoint. According to Paige, in refraining from jumping to advice-giving too soon, her mother was creating a safe space for her, which made her mother a trusted conversational partner. Heather, age 21, a business major who was still figuring out her path after college, found it refreshing and meaningful when her [oftentimes busy and distracted] mother stopped to give Heather her full attention:

> When I'm expressing my thoughts and I see her *fully* turn her body to me and *look at me* and *just truly listen* to what I'm saying, that's big. I can tell when she's thinking about things I'm not talking about. But if I can tell she's fully engaged in what I'm saying and gives me the time to finish my thoughts and get out everything I'm trying to say, that's exactly what I need. Sometimes she will try to interrupt and get *her* feelings and thoughts out, but when she just waits and lets me talk and listens to me, that would be a successful conversation. Every once in a while, when I'm home, she'll come into my room when I'm sitting on my bed and just sit there

> and be with me. I think that's really cool. I think she's trying to get on my level. With this transition, it's a lot of her trying to push me up to the level *she thinks* that I need to be at. So when she comes into my room and just sits on my bed, listens to me, tries to help me, and is like "Ok, let's talk," I know that's pushing her outside of her comfort zone. It makes me really happy that she's putting effort into getting on my level.

Heather sometimes felt her mother was disappointed that she had not found a job yet; but in moments when her mother paused and attempted to "get on her level" as she called it, Heather felt noticeably more confident about the transition itself and sounded more satisfied with her relationship with her mother. Abigail, 22, a first year grad student, loved when she and her mother were, according to her, "vibing" with each other:

> I love when people are on the same page. So anytime I feel like *she understands me* it's really good. Like she knows exactly what I'm saying or I know exactly what she's saying. When we're on the same page, like "Oh me too. Yes. Yeah." That feeling where she listens and understands – that's when I feel understood.

Abigail said her mother just listened. She refrained from inserting her own ideas or telling Abigail what to do; instead, she behaved in ways which made Abigail feel heard and understood, which was helpful and reassuring, according to Abigail. Overall, the daughters in this study wanted their mothers to demonstrate focused, caring, open-minded listening patterns. This was commonly cited as a helpful support behavior. And, as mentioned by several participants, including Heather, mothers' nonverbal behaviors while listening were also meaningful. This reflected the notion that interpersonal involvement and inclusion can be demonstrated through close proximity, increased eye contact, and direct body

orientation and/or forward body leans (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1996; Coker & Burgoon, 1987).

Helpful Patterns of Questioning

Though not directly asked about their mothers' questions, a large number of women discussed the role of questions in their transition experience. As discussed previously, some believed mothers' questions were unhelpful, but others – described below – found mothers' questions personally affirming and also practical in helping them process.

Affirming Questions

Too many questions and too few questions were both perceived negatively by daughters. However, other participants discussed how mothers' questions were valuable and helpful to them. In those cases, this was because the questions indicated care and affirmation, which was viewed as supportive in and of itself. For others (discussed in the next section), the questions served to help receivers process through their thoughts and feelings and were therefore evaluated as helpful and supportive because of that.

As mentioned, some daughters described mothers' questions as welcome and helpful, making them feel cared for and valued. Mothers' genuine interest in them and their transition (demonstrated through questions) was meaningful and affirming. According to Natalie, 23, who worked in marketing,

> I like when she asks me how my job is going or asks me details about it. It makes me feel like she cares a lot and genuinely wants to know how I'm doing. When she asks more specific questions, it makes me feel like *she's not just asking to ask*. She genuinely wants to know answers and wants to know how I'm going.

For Natalie, her mother's questions showed genuine engagement with, and curiosity about, her daughter's life. According to Natalie, her mother was not asking because that was what she was supposed to do; she was asking because she was truly interested, which communicated love and care to Natalie. Amy, 22, a senior, indicated that her mother's questions had become less about checking up on her daughter and more about cultivating their relationship. Amy felt this was a positive evolution:

> I think when she asks questions *now* it's more out of curiosity rather than her worrying about me or what I'm going to do. I feel like the conversations themselves are a lot more lighthearted, rather than her making sure things have gotten done. It's just her genuinely wondering what's happening, which I appreciate.

Similarly, Chelsea, 22, a senior, felt that her mother's questions were more enjoyable – and sparked more meaningful conversation – when they focused on Chelsea's ideas or desired directions as opposed to the accomplishment of tasks:

> She'll ask what I'm thinking or how I'm feeling about certain paths. And then I'll ask *her* questions or bring up other details like, "Oh I had another interview with this place today," and then she'll ask more questions about that. So if I open the door, she'll walk in. I enjoy those conversations.

Reflected in these accounts was the idea that daughters liked when mothers' questions served to affirm the relationship or demonstrate investment in daughters' transition. Questions in this vein showed involvement, without attempting to be instructive in any way.

Process-Oriented Questions

Finally, in addition to descriptions of mothers' questions as relationship-affirming, some participants also felt that mothers' questions were instrumental in helping them

process through their thoughts, feelings, and potential decisions. According to respondents, process-oriented questions were those aimed at helping daughters to figure things out for themselves or to think of things they had not considered before – while also not implying a preferred course of action or a specific way of doing things. For example, Chelsea, 22, a senior, stated:

> A great conversation is one where she's being encouraging. Like, "Well, what do you want to do?" Asking me more personal questions about what my choices will be in life rather than, "This is what your father and I think you should do" or "This is what I think would be best for you." When she tells me what she thinks is best, I'm like, "Yes, absolutely, I understand what you mean. I don't necessarily agree with you, but thank you." But *it's better* when she's like, "Well what do *you* want to do?" And when I'll say something like, "Well I don't know, I just want to work with people because that's what I love," and she'll give me suggestions or she'll say, "Well you should talk to this person." Those moments are really nice when she brings up tools that I can use *on my own*. Then I start thinking about it and the wheels start turning, like "Yeah, that's actually what I want to do."

Chelsea indicated that she was more likely to think about (and later enact) her mother's ideas when they were prefaced with opened-ended, impartial, process-oriented questions. Marie, a 22-year-old senior who expressed a lack of satisfaction with her mother's questions, alternately talked in greater depth about the helpfulness of her stepmother's methods:

> My stepmom has been through similar situations, career-wise, so that's helpful. Honestly, one of her best phrases is "I get that," or "I understand," or "I know how you feel." It's just acknowledging that I do feel that way *and then asking me*

> *questions to help me figure out a better way to go about something*. If I have a roommate conflict or anything like that, she'll say, “Uh huh, I totally feel ya. What are some things you can do besides getting angry about it? What are some things that you can do that aren't passive aggressive?” *She asks me questions that are going to be productive* – versus just saying, “Ok,” like my mom does.

For Marie, her stepmother’s expressions of empathy, as well as the nature of her questions (focused on positive behavioral responses) helped her to think about the issues more fully and craft a strategic game plan. Likewise, Paige, 21, a senior entrepreneurship major, found her mother’s questions useful in facilitating further exploration of her ideas:

> I explained to her all that I had been doing in my internship and she asked some very simple questions like, "What is it that you liked about it? What does it lead to? Why did you like it? What do you think is a job in the real world that could be comparable to that? Have you thought about salary?" Very practical things. Things I need to think about. I get wrapped up in the *idea* of everything, so this helps me think about all the angles.

According to Paige, her mother’s questions had an unbiased, exploratory element to them, which she found very helpful because it allowed her to consider what she really enjoyed and how she could go about finding fulfilling, related work. Similarly, Natalie, 23, said this:

> I ask her for advice and *she has me talk through it* which helps me make a decision. She doesn't say, “Well this is what I think you should do.” It's more *having me talk through it and coming to a conclusion myself*, rather than her making a decision for me.

Natalie appreciated that her mother encouraged her to talk through her thoughts and feelings, using questions to guide this process. In doing so, Natalie was able to discover her own preferences and desires. All in all, daughters spoke positively about questions that affirmed mothers' interest in them and helped them to more fully process their perspectives and decisions.

As it relates to process-oriented questions in particular, daughters' view that these types of questions were helpful reflected Burleson and Goldsmith's (1998) claims that certain conversational features facilitated reappraisal of stressful circumstances, which led to an emotional change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to Burleson and Goldsmith (1998), "conversation [is] a medium in which a distressed person can express, elaborate, and clarify relevant thoughts and feelings" (p. 260); as a result of this exploration, individuals may modify their views of their situation and coping resources, which can lead to a positive change in their emotional state. In asking daughters questions that encouraged them to process their thoughts, feelings, and potential paths, mothers were seen to be facilitating reappraisals and emotional change. This finding reflected the concept of person-centeredness (Burleson & Samter, 1985a, 1985b; Kunkel & Burleson, 1999; Samter, Burleson, & Murphy, 1987), or the idea that highly tailored, open-ended comforting messages encourage elaboration and verbal processing of a distressed person's thoughts and feelings. Highly person-centered messages tend to be rated as most effective in facilitating reappraisals. In this way, when mothers asked process-oriented questions which encouraged elaboration and exploration, these were seen to be effective.

Outcome: Decreased Stress

As described above, daughters felt very positively about communication from mothers that showed support for their autonomy, belief in their future success and coping

abilities, and a genuine personal interest in them and their transition process. Daughters reported that these forms of communication and support were effective in reducing their stress levels. Given how present and profuse stress was for the women in this study, this was an encouraging finding. According to Dominique, age 20, a senior psychology major graduating early, her communication with her mother helped her to refocus and center herself:

> She helps me relax and take things easy whenever I'm anxious or nervous or stressed. She brings me back. She helps me spiritually too – she reminds me of the things I don't see whenever I'm stressed or anxious. When things are blocking my view, she always brings it back into view. She helps me move forward. She's really helpful in that way.

In addition to encouraging her to see the bigger picture, Dominique's mother also advocated for self-care. Dominque said she was more likely to prioritize sleep, healthy eating patterns, and relaxing activities like baths after conversations with her mother (things which she believed improved her reactions to stress). Like Dominique, Mariah, 22, alluded to her mother's spiritual guidance during the transition:

> She was like, "Calm down. Ask God to give you direction." She would always tell me to pray and to take time for myself. That's her big thing, taking time for myself. If I'm dealing with stress or I'm sad, she'll say, "It's okay to be by yourself when you deal with those types of feelings." So she would always talk to me about how to deal with stress. *It helps.*

Mariah felt more peaceful following her conversations with her mother because her mother encouraged her to explore and process her feelings, not just in conversation with mother but also within herself. Such processing serves to promote reappraisals (Lazarus &

Folkman, 1984), which can positively impact emotions relating to stress. According to Selma, the engineer:

> I think that my mom was really good at keeping me busy right after graduation when I was feeling all that anxiety. She was also a good – I won't say emotional crutch – but *she knew how to help with that stress that I was having.*

Selma's mother spent a lot of time with her, planning with her and doing fun things together, which distracted Selma from the anxiety she was feeling about her move and her upcoming job.

Outcome: Increased Confidence and Efficacy

In examining the effects of mothers' perceived attempts at support on daughters' handling of the transition, another positive outcome was that mothers' support bolstered daughters' confidence and sense of efficacy surrounding the transition. Specifically, daughters felt more confident, in control, and willing to take risks in response to mothers' encouraging, validating communication with them. According to Brooke, 22, her communication with her mother "[gave] me more confidence that I can do it, that I will be fine." This theme embodied the effects of mothers acting as a confident cheerleader, as described earlier. When mothers were excited for daughters, and confident in daughters' capabilities, daughters felt more self-assured and in control of their decisions. In the words of Natalie, 23:

> The way she speaks to me about these things has made me feel like I'm more in control than I originally thought I was. In transitioning, I *do* feel like I have control. I can figure things out and make things work, and I feel like she helped me see that.

Natalie's mother was never pushy with her ideas. Rather, their conversations helped Natalie to consider her own goals in greater depth and specificity. For Natalie, her mother

communicated to her that any path she picked would be a valuable learning experience, thereby reducing her worry about choosing the right job. Also, since starting her new job, Natalie felt she approached her work more confidently because of her mother's continued encouragement. Abigail, 22, also reported feeling a boost of confidence during this transition due to her mother's communication:

> *I feel confident going into it* because I know that they fully support me, especially my mom. They want to know what's going on so that they can be involved. They're supportive. They're encouraging. My mom tries to keep me from being too stressed about everything. She always tells me I can do it.

Abigail, like others, felt the benefits of her mother's comforting message and advice. Successfully transitioning into a new chapter seemed more doable because of Abigail's phone calls with her mother. She believed her parents, particularly her mother, were "there for me no matter what" which served to increase her perception of her own resources in handling the transition. Echoing previous findings, this theme supported the idea that when mothers were confident in their daughters, present in giving support, and open-minded about the future possibilities, daughters benefited from this and felt more confident in their own abilities to navigate the uncertainties and new challenges of the transition period.

Outcome: Feeling Anchored

Finally, in respect to the effects of mothers' support on daughters' transition, participants described their mothers as an important anchor point in their life, a place they could come back to, to feel grounded. In a sea of change, these daughters described their mothers as a safe, unchanging, familiar place. For example, Samantha, 21, felt grounded by the idea that she and her mother had an enduring partnership – a picture her mother had often painted: "She is definitely always saying we're doing this together. We're partners in

this." This helped Samantha to feel less alone, even when she thought about moving far away and starting her own business. She knew her mother would always be there, having her back, and providing a point of return and safety even if things turned out badly. Her frequent conversations with her mother reinforced this idea. For Amber, 23, a newlywed and new grad student, her mother provided a sense of stability, even when everything else felt new, foreign, and somewhat chaotic. In Amber's words:

> She helped me so much. I moved into my in-laws' house after graduation which was really bizarre. I also had a new internship this summer, so I was somewhere totally new. It was crazy. *She grounded me a lot*. I would call her in all these strange situations and be like "Ok, tell me something familiar." I'd watch reruns or movies I've seen fifty million times, just to see something familiar. *She was also that for me* – she was that familiarity that I needed in the transition that I didn't have. She played a huge part in all of that.

Vanessa, 21, echoed this idea of feeling lost without her mother: "Yeah, if I didn't have her, I'd be really lost and confused. I wouldn't know what to do and I'd have so many questions." For Vanessa, her mother played an important role in helping her feel stable and secure despite the impending change. Similarly, Marissa, 22, appreciated having someone in her corner who was always there and who cared, even if her mother's communication was not always what she needed it to be:

> I think having her to talk to about what I'm feeling stressed about is a huge help, but it's also kind of like talking to a wall that really cares about you. I know that's probably a nonsensical metaphor but, even though it's not going to help me at all, I know that she cares. And I know that I can unload what I'm feeling on her.

For Marissa, even though her mother's attempts at support were not always perfectly executed (and perhaps not directly beneficial), Marissa valued the consistency of the relationship. She knew her mother cared deeply for her and was not going anywhere. "It's like talking to a wall that really cares about you" describes the complexity of their relationship: even though her mother was not skilled at providing well-tailored support – and she did not always make Marissa feel heard – her presence was a stable, unmoving, therefore comforting point of return for Marissa when things felt stressful or out of control. This feeling of having an anchor point was of value to Marissa even if the support she received from mother was not perfect. In line with the work of Goldsmith, McDermott, and Alexander (2000), she viewed her mother as "supportive" (i.e., loyal, available, reassuring), although not necessarily "helpful" (i.e., beneficial to the task) or "sensitive" (i.e., gentle, considerate). Likewise, Stephanie, 21, expressed her feelings about her mother's steadfastness: "The relationship itself is helping me through the transition. I know that if I needed to call her and just talk, she'd be there. Anytime." Stephanie's mother was very available to her, which made her feel that she always had someone to reach out to if she needed something. Marissa and Stephanie both derived benefits from their mothers' consistent presence and availability. This reflected elements of the psychological tradition of perceived available social support, namely that daughters appreciated having an overall sense that their mothers would be there for them if/when they needed them to be. Finally, Sierra, 22, summed up her feelings which capture this idea of mothers being a place of constancy, an anchor in uncertain times:

> If she wasn't consistent, I feel like I would be more stressed. It would put a strain on me, and it wouldn't be a smooth transition. Because, at the end of the day, when

you're transitioning from one milestone to another, *you need a foundation and she's mine.* Our relationship being solid has helped that transition.

Sierra's comments reflected her view that she could not have navigated the transition successfully without her mother's consistent support. Sierra's mother was very verbally encouraging of her daughter and she believed her daughter was capable of succeeding at anything she put her mind to. She was also supportive financially, filling in the gaps when Sierra needed assistance. These behaviors, combined, made Sierra feel that she has a foundation in her mother, which provided her with an increased sense of security.

Summary

In sum, in seeking to understand what features of support the daughters in this study perceived as helpful or unhelpful, it can be inferred from the experiences of those featured above that messages that were non-judgmental, not dictatorial, open-ended, and encouraging of personal freedom were those that elicited the most positive response from daughters during this unpredictable, transitional time of their life.

CONCLUSION

All in all, we know that the transition from college to career can be a complex and therefore stressful time. The daughters interviewed faced unique stressors relating to uncertainty, decision-making, finances, social pressures, and various adjustments to professional life. While daughters did communicate with their mothers about their transition process, mothers' attempts at support were not always perceived as helpful. When mothers said or did things to threaten daughters' autonomy, were too forceful with their own ideas, or demonstrated a lack of attentiveness or investment in daughters'

transition, this was evaluated negatively by daughters and resulted in increased stress and control of information, according to those interviewed. Other communication behaviors from mothers were evaluated positively, however. When mothers validated daughters' autonomy, cheered daughters on in their pursuits, listened closely, and asked helpful, open-ended questions, this was evaluated positively by daughters and resulted in decreased stress, increased confidence, and a sense of being anchored despite the chaos, according to participants. This echoed the work of Murphy et al. (2010) which showed that mothers and other family members were seen as helpful and supportive when they offered unconditional support of an individual's decisions, accepting whatever choice that was made without pressure or critique. The current study's findings also reiterate the work of others who have showed that mothers play a key role in students' transition from college into the work force (Blustein et al., 1995; Flouri & Buchanan, 2002; Mao et al., 2012; Murphy et al., 2010; O'Brien, 1996; O'Brien et al., 2000; Ryan et al., 1996). (See Appendix E for a chart reviewing all of the themes that arose from the current investigation.)

Chapter 5: Discussion

OVERVIEW

The mother-daughter relationship is considered, by some, to be one of the most significant relationships in a woman's life (Block, 1990; Golden, 2001; Jordan, 1993; Maushart, 1999; Miller-Day, 2004; Tannen, 2006), key to a daughter's development and identity formation (Bojczyk et al., 2011; Gordon, 1998) and characterized – in potentially positive and negative ways – by closeness, longevity, tension, and support (Rossi & Rossi, 1990; Trees, 2000; Troll, 1987). Mothers and daughters exhibit high levels of participation in each other's lives, communicating about a wide range of issues (Tannen, 2006) and, according to Miller-Day (2004), "co-authoring" (p. 3) the other's life story to varying degrees. Traditionally, research into the mother-daughter dyad has tended towards two main areas: mothers' parenting and its effects on daughters' childhood and adolescent development (Boyd, 1989; Chodorow, 1974; Thompson & Walker, 1984), and the relationship between mothers and adult daughters during mothers' illness and/or old age (Allen & Walker, 1992; Silverstein et al., 2002; Walker & Pratt, 1991). Far fewer studies have explored mother-daughter communication during emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000), and none to date have focused on mother-daughter support processes during the transition from college to career specifically.

This dissertation project was designed to further explore the provision, evaluation, and impact of social support in a significant yet understudied context (Fisher, 2004). During this stage of life, emerging adult daughters are ostensibly evolving in their independence, while at the same time facing career-related stressors that could cause them to need and want support from their mothers. To determine how mothers' support is evaluated during this complex time, Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative approach to

social support was adopted. According to Goldsmith's model, effective and satisfying support requires the successful management of multiple goals relating to task, identity, and relationship. Given the significance of the mother-daughter relationship (presumed relational considerations), the demands of the job search process (presumed task considerations), and daughters' growing independence (presumed identity considerations), the normative approach provided a helpful lens through which to explore highly pertinent issues in this context. The following sections review the results of the current study and highlight the ways in which the present findings are connected to existing literature. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of the practical applications, limitations, and future directions of the research.

REVIEW OF FINDINGS

Stressors of the Transition (RQ1)

In line with previous scholarship which defines the transition from college to career as a stressful one (Kenny & Sirin, 2006; Nelson et al., 2007), the present investigation uncovered multiple categories of stressors described by the emerging adult daughters who were interviewed. Broadly, there emerged two classes of stressors: those experienced while searching for a job and those experienced after starting a job. Participants still on the job market at the time of interviews reported struggling with (a) the unknowns of the transition (uncertainty surrounding the future); (b) decision-making (feeling overwhelmed by the number and types of choices); (c) worries about financial independence (making enough money to fully support themselves); and (d) satisfying others' expectations about what their transition and future career should look like (perceived pressures from peers, parents, society as a whole). Those who had already landed jobs at the time of interviews described

the difficulties of (a) adjusting to a new pace of life (exhaustion from long hours of work, new schedules and routines); and (b) battling isolation (adjusting to unexpected norms relating to time with friends, as well as having to make new friends). In line with previous research on stress and coping, the women in the present study experienced psychological stress as a result of the perceived demands of the transition (including necessary job searching tasks, adjustment to change, etc.) outweighing their assessment of their own personal resources and abilities (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For these women, especially those nearing graduation, problem-focused coping (Folkman & Lazarus, 1985; Folkman et al., 1986) often took the form of actively researching, networking, and applying for jobs. One reported avenue of emotion-focused coping, on the other hand, involved daughters communicating with their mothers about their transition-related tasks and stress.

In line with Brashers' (2001) uncertainty management theory, participants experienced stress due to the many unknowns of the transition process, as well as the challenges of making important decisions about future directions. For these women, not knowing what the future held, being unsure of which avenues were best/right, and/or grappling with a lack of confidence, efficacy, and – at times – information fueled this sense of uncertainty and, in turn, stress. Choosing a location (near or far from family) was a stressor voiced by many participants. Daughters were torn between wanting to stay close to family while also desiring to spread their wings and pursue jobs farther away; some felt family pressure to stay nearby as well. This finding echoed Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) relational dialectics framework. Daughters found themselves wrestling with the dialectical tensions of integration-separation (and related issues of autonomy) and stability-change, attempting to balance and decide between two desirable yet opposing realities.

Daughters were also visibly concerned about establishing themselves financially, either out of necessity (i.e., their parents were going to cut them off) or personal choice (i.e., they felt strongly about no longer burdening their parents). This reflected a continued negotiation of Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) integration-separation tension, and also reaffirmed research by Romo and colleagues (Romo, 2011, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Romo & Abetz, 2016) which showed that money is a topic which can be full of uncertainty and stress within families.

Furthermore, when recounting the period of time leading up to graduation, daughters described the pressure they felt to measure up to their peers' achievements (specifically in relation to how early they needed to have things figured out) and others' expectations for them (regarding jobs, money, location, and timing). These perceived pressures increased the overall stress of the transition for the women interviewed. The women found themselves having to weigh their own achievements and/or desires against those of others, which increased their feelings of uncertainty (e.g., "will I be able to measure up?") and therefore stress, as predicted by Brashers (2001) and Lazarus and Folkman (1984) respectively.

Finally, those who had already entered the workforce reported having difficulties adjusting to the new schedule and rhythm of their post-grad life, in addition to experiencing feelings of isolation. In regards to the former, participants were working much longer hours than they had been used to, while simultaneously learning a variety of new processes and skills. These factors, when combined, caused them to feel highly exhausted at the end of each day, overwhelmed by the rigor of their new lifestyle. In line with stress and coping theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the strain and fatigue of settling into the new job was perceived to exceed their existing physical and mental resources, thereby causing feelings

of stress. In regards to their evolving social life, many of the women interviewed found themselves in a new city, or farther away from existing network ties, leading to feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, their exhaustion levels prevented them from taking the time to invest in new friendships, which only perpetuated the problem. Some struggled to find a balance between their new life and their old patterns, which reflected Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) dialectical tension of predictability-novelty. In this case, too much novelty was disorienting and stressful.

Effective and Ineffective Forms of Communication (RQ2, RQ3)

The results of this study indicated that daughters communicated with their mothers about the transition, they were aware of mothers' support behaviors, and they were attuned to whether these behaviors are unhelpful or unhelpful to them, in the context of their larger transition experience. Findings suggested that daughters liked when their mothers affirmed and encouraged their growing independence, but they disliked when their mothers challenged or undermined their autonomy. Similarly, daughters appreciated when their mothers communicated belief in them and trust in their ideas and handling of the transition process, but they did not appreciate when their mothers were overly directive or pushy with their own ideas. As will be described in greater detail below, this supported Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) notion that communication (and specifically support) is seen to be successful if it effectively attends to the relevant identity concerns of the receiver. These findings also reaffirmed Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness theory and Goffman's (1959) concept of face. When behaviors or statements from mothers contested daughters' desired independence, appeared to restrict daughters' actions, or implied limits in competence, this was considered a negative face threat and was therefore evaluated as negative, undesirable, or unproductive.

In regards to specific behaviors that daughters labeled as effective or ineffective, findings indicated that daughters were aware of – and cared about – mothers' patterns of listening and asking questions. Daughters were highly satisfied and bolstered by their mothers' displays of patience and open-mindedness in conversation, as well as their demonstrations of attentiveness and immediacy when listening. This supported the idea that interpersonal involvement and inclusion can be demonstrated through close proximity, increased eye contact, and direct body orientation and/or forward body leans (Burgoon et al., 1996; Coker & Burgoon, 1987). Additionally, it reaffirmed Goldsmith's (2004) focus on relational considerations as being a key component within the exchange of support. Conversely, daughters were unsatisfied when their mothers failed to listen attentively (both verbally and nonverbally), were dismissive of conversations about the transition, refused to weigh in on related matters, turned the conversation back to themselves, or took over the reins of the conversation (in order to emphasize their own wishes, ideas, or advice). In appearing distracted and/or dismissive, mothers made daughters feel less valued, which caused them to evaluate the communication negatively (Goldsmith, 2004). In part, this finding also this reflected the ideas of Burleson (1982; 1994) who argued that comforting messages are ineffective when the support provider makes themselves the focus of the conversation instead of continuing to track with the person in distress.

In regards to questions – which was an unexpected finding overall – daughters appreciated when their mothers asked affirming questions (i.e., questions which showed genuine interest and involvement and therefore made the recipient feel valued) and process-oriented questions (i.e., questions aimed at helping them think further through their thoughts, feelings, and potential decisions). Daughters' assessment of process-oriented questions as being helpful in nature supported Burleson and Goldsmith's (1998) claim that

such conversational features can facilitate reappraisal of stressful circumstances, which can lead to positive emotional change (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). This finding also supported the research on person-centeredness (Burleson & Samter, 1985a, 1985b; Kunkel & Burleson, 1999; Samter et al., 1987), in that messages which encouraged elaboration and verbal processing were those that were rated as more effective.

In the opposite way, daughters did not like when their mothers asked too many questions (as they found it overwhelming, annoying, or pointless), or when their mothers asked too few questions (as this conveyed a lack of interest and involvement). This finding, that both too many and too few questions was unhelpful, may imply a dilemma (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997) for support providers. Mothers may have perceived their questions as being motivated by care and a desire to help (which could have prompted them to ask more than daughters desired); likewise, mothers may have been afraid of butting into daughters' lives and decisions at a time when daughters were exploring their freedom, which could have led them to ask fewer questions than daughters would have liked. All in all, daughters in this study interpreted mothers' requests for information in more or less positive ways depending on the amount and type of questions being asked. This reaffirmed findings by Braithwaite (1991), Bute (2009), and Donovan-Kicken et al. (2011) which have indicated that targets of questions may interpret said questions in varied ways based on their attributions of the questioners' motives and behaviors.

Effects of Communication on the Transition (RQ4)

According to the daughters in this study, behaviors and messages from mothers which were evaluated as helpful/effective/satisfying contributed to decreased stress, increased confidence and efficacy, and an increased feeling of being anchored during an uncertain time of life. On the flip side, the actions that daughters labeled as

unhelpful/ineffective/unsatisfying contributed to increased stress and motivated daughters' decisions to withhold information (in order to protect themselves from the stress of their mothers' worry) or to wait until things were settled to divulge details (so as to prevent their mothers from becoming overinvolved). One reason for topic avoidance, which is reinforced by the current study, is self-protection, or the desire to evade criticism or the threat of vulnerability (Afifi & Guerrero, 2000; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995). Similarly, as echoed in the current findings, communication privacy management theory (Petronio, 1991, 2000, 2002) argues that individuals maintain privacy boundaries based on perceived benefits and costs of disclosure. Finally, these findings further elucidated, at least in small part, the concept of protective buffering (Coyne & Smith, 1991, 1994), or the act of strategically shielding a relational partner from information you believe may increase their worry or stress (Afifi et al., 2006). For these daughters, buffering behaviors (evidenced by heightened control of information) ultimately served to help them protect themselves, because when mothers were stressed, daughters felt stressed.

CURRENT FINDINGS IN RELATION TO GOLDSMITH'S NORMATIVE MODEL

The twofold goal of the current project was to further document emerging adult daughters' experience of the transition from college to career, and – even more importantly – to understand how these women evaluated the support they received from their mothers as being more or less successful and effective. The latter aim mirrored that of Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative model of social support and, as such, this theory served as an informal framework for the present study, providing broad sensitizing concepts (Bowen, 2006) which helped to inform (though not directly regulate) the interview questions and coding procedures. In the following sections, I will review the

main tenets of the normative model, and discuss the ways in which the current findings are related to Goldsmith's ideas.

Review of the Normative Model of Social Support

With her normative theory, Goldsmith (2001, 2004) attempted to uncover "why some communicative responses to conflicting goals are likely to be more effective and appropriate than other responses" (2001, p. 518) and to "derive some baseline predictions about the types of behaviors support recipients are most likely to judge as positive under various conditions" (2004, pg. 25). Goldsmith sees communication – and the communication of support – as strategically formulated in response to multiple goals on the part of both the sender and receiver. As is relevant to the current context, communication is considered successful and/or satisfying to a receiver when their goals and needs have been attended to within the sender's message. Goldsmith posits that social support is enacted within the context of a conversation and is subject to evaluation by the participants, particularly the receivers. Support that is judged to be positive and useful is likely to promote coping, whereas support that is perceived negatively may have the opposite effect. While the exact pathways are still being tested and explored, the broad idea is that social support is enacted through communication which, when evaluated favorably, leads to increased adaptive coping, which is positively associated with physical and psychological well-being. The normative model of social support focuses heavily on these first two elements, calling for "detailed examination[s] of conversations and the features and processes that are associated with participants' evaluations of those conversations as helpful, sensitive, and supportive" (Goldsmith, 2004, p. 28).

According to Goldsmith (2004), three processes are of particular interest within the model: First, the appraisal of the problem within the conversation (task-specific

considerations); second, the self-presentation attempts of those involved (valued identities being "affirmed or challenged" [p. 30]); and, third, both parties' modes of relating to each other through influence and involvement (relational concerns). Every conversation has task, identity, and relational implications, and these multiple purposes can compete with each other and cause complications for support providers. Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) model recognizes that support providers can do a better or worse job of attending to these multiple purposes which, in turn, contributes to the perceived success of the support: "Some conversations are more satisfying and successful than others because some ways of communicating do a better job of accomplishing the task while also managing what talk means for identities and relationships" (Goldsmith, Lindholm, & Bute, 2006, p. 2080).

Within the current study, daughters were asked about their communication with their mothers during their transition from college to career. Participants described their mothers' attempts at support, discussing the messages and behaviors which they found to be helpful or unhelpful, supportive or unsupportive. The following paragraphs review how their experiences mapped onto Goldsmith's ideas about the relevance of task, identity, and relational goals.

Task Concerns in the Present Study

In the words of Goldsmith (2004), "the task component of [an] interaction has to do with facilitating coping and might be accomplished by any number of actions that seek to help another in solving a problem or managing his or her emotional reaction to it" (p. 47). For the daughters in this study, many of their reported stressors were focused specifically on task considerations: the stress of applying for jobs, deciding on the best job option, worrying about financial matters, grappling with a new routine, and so forth. These practical stressors caused them to reach out to their mothers to vent or to seek guidance.

Daughters discussed their mothers' use of questions as being more or less helpful in meeting their task goals. Process-oriented questions were viewed as the most helpful towards this end. These types of question encouraged daughters to talk through their thoughts and ideas about the transition, facilitating deeper consideration of the issues, aiding in decision-making, and creating space and time for reappraisals of the original stressor (which led to better coping and decreased stress; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Despite daughters' concerns about task, receiving too many questions from their mothers was frustrating and stressful for them, a finding which supported Goldsmith's (2004) claim that simply having more of something (in this case, task-attentive questions) is not always desirable; but rather, the ways in which support attends to a receiver's multidimensional needs is key. (For example, sometimes too many questions, though task-focused, implied a lack of trust in daughters' planning and decisions, meaning their valued independent identity – discussed next – was not being affirmed.)

Identity Concerns in the Present Study

In contrast to task, the "identity component includes features of an interaction that reflect on who individuals are as they engage in the task (both specific identities that are important, such as mother, friend, or expert, but also more general attributes such as one's autonomy, efficacy, and worth)" (Goldsmith, 2004, p. 47). To some degree, daughters' stress about measuring up to their peers' accomplishments or their parents' expectations reflected these identity concerns. Participants wanted to be seen as successful and worthy in comparison to others, and to be seen as good daughters who satisfied their parents' hopes and wishes. When they fell behind in meeting transition milestones, this caused stress. Daughters' identity goals were also highly recognizable in their descriptions of their mothers encouraging and/or undermining their autonomy as emerging adult women.

Discussions of whether or not they perceived that their mothers trusted them and treated them as adults factored heavily in their accounts of transition-specific communication. When mothers attempted to take the reins or be too directive with their ideas, daughters saw this as a challenge to their evolving independent identity (and evaluated it negatively). Conversely, daughters were highly bolstered by mothers who affirmed and encouraged their freedom and autonomy. When mothers showcased confidence in daughters' abilities to make decisions and to adjust to new contexts, daughters evaluated this positively.

Relational Concerns in the Present Study

Finally, the "relational component has to do with participants' roles relative to one another (which might be characterized as relational types such as good friend or supportive wife or by characteristics such as reciprocity, similarity, power, and solidarity)" (Goldsmith, 2004, p. 47). Daughters appeared highly attuned to their mothers' listening patterns and attributed this to mothers' level of care and concern. When mothers took the time to focus on daughters' transition-related concerns and to ask questions which showcased interest and involvement, daughters felt loved and valued by their mothers. Conversely, when mothers were distracted during transition-related conversations, or failed to ask questions, this was perceived as a lack of attention and care. Additionally, when mothers expressed excitement about their daughters' opportunities and transition, daughters evaluated this positively and felt bolstered by it. Finally, daughters reported that effective support from mothers made them feel anchored and relationally connected, fostering a sense of groundedness and security despite the change they were experiencing. This feeling of someone "having their back" (in the words of Mariah) was particularly meaningful.

Summary

Goldsmith's normative approach has focused on how support behaviors are evaluated by receivers and, in turn, what types of behaviors are likely to result in desired outcomes (Goldsmith, 2001). Overall, daughters were most satisfied when mothers took the time to talk and process logistics with them (task), when mothers affirmed their capabilities and encouraged their freedom (identity), and when mothers showed care and involvement through time, constancy, and careful listening (relationship). Daughters who reported high levels of satisfaction with their mothers' support were those whose mothers were competently addressing all three needs. This served to uphold Goldsmith's ideas of what contributes to successful support. Furthermore, daughters described being more stressed (and, in turn, acting to control information) when mothers challenged their sense of independence, or were too directive and overinvolved. Conversely, daughters reported decreased stress, increased confidence, and a feeling of being anchored when mothers showed belief/trust in them and communicated in ways which affirmed their emerging adult identity. This reaffirmed the theoretical assumption that – whether effective or ineffective, successful or unsuccessful – support is related to coping and well-being.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

The purpose of normative theory is to "predict and explain meanings and evaluations of communicative responses" and to ascertain "how people should behave if they wish to achieve desired outcomes" (Goldsmith, 2001, p. 515) As such, part of the aim of the current study was to provide practical recommendations for individuals navigating the support provision process during daughters' transition from college to career.

In line with Goldsmith's normative model of social support, the current findings upheld the notion that support will be most successful if it attends to the multiple goals of

the recipient, namely their task, identity, and relational concerns. One important practical takeaway was that daughters were most satisfied when mothers affirmed and facilitated their growing independence. Daughters desired mothers' involvement, but they also wanted to feel that their mothers believed in them and trusted them. When mothers attempted to control, daughters lessened their involvement and information-sharing. As scholars have asserted, as daughters grow into adulthood, the roles of both parties become increasingly ambiguous (Fingerman, 2001; Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006). According to Miller-Day (2004), when mothers or daughters resist the natural processes of change (in this case relating to daughters gaining more freedom), the relationship experiences more intense growing pains. According to Fisher and Miller-Day (2006), if daughters' growing autonomy is embraced, and efforts at intimacy continue, change can actually bring about increased closeness, as mothers and daughters begin to view each other as peers, rather than exclusively as parents and children.

Another practical takeaway involved listening and questions. Daughters were highly satisfied when mothers listened attentively and with open minds, not distracted and not rushing to offer advice or to take control of the conversation. For participants, this included when their mothers took the time to simply sit and talk with them, to be nonverbally engaged (e.g., making eye contact, not being distracted by technology), and to be patient in letting them process before jumping in with ideas and suggestions. These positive listening behaviors appeared to affirm the relationship and identity considerations at play. Additionally, daughters desired for their mothers to ask questions which showed interest and involvement – while not asking so many questions as to convey a need for hyper-involvement or control. For example, daughters liked when their mothers wanted to know more about their profession (e.g., "So what are all the different things you do in

social media marketing?"), but they responded negatively to questions that felt like reminders or implied any sense of pressure (e.g., "Did you email that recruiter yet? When are you going to do that?"). Open-ended questions, coupled with patient, active listening appeared to have the best effect. (On the other side of the coin, too few questions was perceived as a lack of investment, meaning that asking some questions appears to be better than asking none.) As described above, affirming questions (which showed interest and thereby validated daughters and affirmed the relationship) as well as process-oriented questions (which helped daughters explore their own ideas in their own way) were viewed as very helpful, satisfactory, and desirable. For instance, mothers asking, "What have you been thinking/how have you been feeling about X," gave daughters the sense that their mothers cared about them and valued their well-being, unique perspective, and process. Once again, this relates to both relationship and task goals. Finally, daughters appreciated when their mothers showed excitement and unconditional support for them. As such, this type of celebratory support should be enacted whenever possible/appropriate.

LIMITATIONS

The present investigation contributed to our existing knowledge of mother-daughter communication, as well as the transition to adulthood. Nevertheless, certain limitations are of note and should be considered by researchers in communication and allied fields who wish to study this context and/or relationship. First, this study focused solely on the experiences of daughters, without including reports from mothers. Ideally, when conducting research into dyadic communication, both partners' perspectives should be examined as a means of further understanding participant experiences – and the communication phenomenon in question – as uniquely situated in, and influenced by, dyadic patterns and functioning. However, given the understudied nature of mother-

daughter communication during daughters' transition from adolescence to adulthood (Fisher & Miller-Day, 2006), even a one-sided examination of these dynamics served to further establish and inform our knowledge of this topic. It is hoped that this will lead to future research which may include the reports of both parties.

Secondly, this study collected retrospective interview data, asking participants to provide accounts of past support experiences. I did not observe mothers and daughters during their communication interactions, but rather asked daughters to recall previously enacted support behaviors and significant conversational interchanges that they had experienced and could remember. Self-report data of this nature can be limited in that recollections may be inaccurate or biased (Metts, Sprecher, & Cupach, 1991) and only one side of the story is being presented. However, while self-report methods contain constraints, there is evidence to suggest that this is still a meaningful and valuable form of data collection (Baxter, 2011) and that individuals can remember and recount their communication experiences, including specific remarks (Benoit & Benoit, 1988, 1990). Within tests of Goldsmith's normative model of social support, it is not uncommon for researchers to examine this type of interview data.

Thirdly, while the results discussed in Chapter 4 may implicitly suggest some causality based on participants' perceptions of their experiences ("My mom said or did X, it helped me cope, and now I'm doing better"), the nature of this dissertation and its data precludes any causal claims. While the results of this investigation revealed participants' responses to mothers' communication and, in doing so, served to affirm the tenets of Goldsmith's model and apply it in a new context, subsequent research is needed to verify exact cause-and-effect orderings in regards to this process and context.

Fourthly, this study was limited in its use of convenience and snowball sampling as a means of obtaining participants. These sampling methods may have encouraged participation from daughters who were comfortable discussing their communication with their mothers. In this, it is possible that young women who viewed their relationship and/or support experiences very negatively may not have been fully represented in the study. It should be noted, however, that many participants readily admitted to [various kinds and degrees of] difficulty within their mother-daughter dyad, thereby expanding the range of experiences represented. Convenience sampling can also produce relatively homogenous groups as it relates to race, region, and social class – especially when sampling college students. Participants in the current study were close in age (20-23 years old) and relatively homogenous in regards to race (77.1% Caucasian). Most attended public universities (66.7%) and resided in the Southwest (55.6%). Given the qualitative nature of this dissertation, as well as its limited subject pool, I do not suggest that mother-daughter communication during daughters' transition to adulthood looks the same in every culture or family. Results should be interpreted and applied accordingly.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This study was not without its limitations, but bringing together the perspectives of these 35 emerging adult women in the midst of their transition from college to career was a valuable step towards further understanding a unique and meaningful transition point that impacts both daughters and mothers. These stories, and the accompanying analyses, may now serve as the foundation for further research in this realm

One of the most resounding themes found within daughters' reports related to their experience of, and feelings toward, their mothers' communicative validation or invalidation of their identity as independent, emerging adult women. Daughters spoke at

length – even when not directly prompted – about the ways in which their mothers conferred, ignored, or overruled their sense of identity as burgeoning adults. While some mothers appeared to be striking a satisfying balance in this area, the majority of daughters interviewed were not completely satisfied with the ways in which their mothers were [dis]affirming their sense of self at that time in their lives. Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative model has asserted that the components of task, relationship, and identity are all at play when individuals are sending and receiving messages; specific to this support model is the idea that receivers evaluate how well a message attends to these three factors and succeeds in being supportive. However, in this particular context, daughters were preoccupied with issues of identity and how their mothers' communication behaviors attended to that particular need, above others. They were also cognizant of, and concerned with, task and relational elements but – seemingly – to a lesser degree. This echoed previous work by Wilson and colleagues (Meina & Wilson, 2011; Wilson & Putnam, 1990) and suggested a prioritization of goals. Specifically that, at various points in time, or perhaps as it relates to the nuances of emerging adulthood, certain goals may become prominent, or take precedence, over others. An expanded analysis of the nuances of prioritizing goals – in support contexts specifically – would be a worthy undertaking in future studies.

The most unexpected theme that emerged related to daughters' reports of their mothers' questions as helpful features or conduits of support. I did not prompt daughters to think or talk about questions, but most of them did in some way, shape, or form. Typically, scholars have conceived of information seeking (which is what a question could be considered to be) as a support seeking mechanism (Brashers, Goldsmith, & Hsieh, 2002). As such, it is interesting to have found it functioning as a support provision

mechanism instead, according to daughters in this study. Daughters reported that too many questions or too few questions was unhelpful, each in its own way. Presumably, in concordance with the ideas of Goldsmith, too many questions was viewed as a violation of the receiver's identity goal (the sender overstepping, for instance), whereas too few questions was a violation of the receiver's relationship goal (not enough interest shown). The types of questions daughters found helpful were two-fold: (a) affirming questions, meaning those that showed attention, interest, or value to the recipient (which would clearly relate to relationship goals); and (b) process-oriented questions, meaning those aimed at assisting daughters in thinking things through or reaching a conclusion (which would seem to relate to task goals). Overall, within this finding, all of the three goals in Goldsmith's model were at play. In light of these findings, if one possible communicative function of questions is support provision (symbolically or more tangibly), this would be an interesting and valuable area to explore in future investigations.

Finally, while the nature of this dissertation and its data precludes any formal conclusions about the following matters, there were notable examples of participants who did not appear to need attendance to all three goals (task, relationship, and identity) to order to evaluate their mothers' messages as successful and supportive, or to view their mothers as important sources of support. For example, a few daughters readily admitted that their mothers were not good at providing them with task support; but they still indicated overall satisfaction with the support messages they received and with their mother-daughter relationship. Additionally, in certain cases, mothers seemed to regularly violate their daughters' identity needs with their attempts at help, and yet not all of these daughters seemed to mind (although most did). On the other hand, as it regards relationship goals, if mothers were not attending to their daughters' relational needs, many times the

support (and/or the source) seemed to be rejected. While there is not enough (or the right type of) data within this study to pursue further exploration of these matters, it does beg the question: does a support provider need to meet all three goals to be successful, as commonly suggested, or can receivers report full or partial satisfaction when only two out of three are met? And, if so, is this a context-specific supposition? Or is it tied to a particular type of relationship? Are daughters willing to accept imperfect/incomplete support simply to maintain (or to avoid disrupting) a valued relationship? Or is there something special about mothers that makes their support more valuable, or more fool-proof, even if it is not flawlessly constructed or delivered? Given Miller-Day's (2004) assertions of mothers' unique role and place in the family (and in daughters' lives specifically), it would be interesting and worthwhile to pursue this line of questioning further in future studies.

Finally, a few daughters in this study reported that their mothers simultaneously increased and decreased the stress of their transition. In the confines of the current investigation, it is impossible for us to fully understand how or why that was, but it is worth noting and perhaps worth pursuing in the future. Other topics worthy of further consideration and examination in this context would be topic avoidance and Petronio's (1991, 2000, 2002) privacy management theory (since daughters reported controlling information as a result of mothers' over-involvement), as well as the nuances of self-centered vs. other-centered protective buffering.

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the support experiences of daughters transitioning from college to career has the potential to contribute to multiple areas of communication knowledge and scholarship. The current study utilized Goldsmith's (2001, 2004) normative model of social support as a basis for exploring daughters' reports of helpful features of support, as

well as the effects of [more or less effective] support on their navigation of a potentially stressful life transition. Results showed that daughters desired involvement with and support from their mothers during their transition and that – in line with Goldsmith's assertions – mothers' support was evaluated as most satisfying and helpful when it attended to daughters' multidimensional needs as emerging adults. Through collecting and analyzing the accounts of these 35 women, the current investigation helped to solidify and diversify what we know about the transition from college to career, mother-daughter communication, and the support provision and evaluation process.

Appendix A: IRB Application and Approval Letter

Research Proposal

1. **Title**

   A Qualitative Exploration of Daughters' Reports of Supportive and Unsupportive Responses from their Mother during the Transition from College to Career.

2. **Principal Investigator**

   Erin Donovan, ED6243, Communication Studies.

   Co-Investigator
   Jane Damron, JHD622, Communication Studies. The Research Personnel Form for the co-investigator is attached.

3. **Purpose**

   Mothers and daughters share a unique and significant bond. The closeness and complexity that frequently characterizes this dyadic relationship plays an important role in a woman's life, across the life span and, in particular, during times of change and transition. According to scholars, a daughter's journey into adulthood represents a critical period of change for the mother-daughter relationship as roles are renegotiated and communication is adapted in light of daughters' growing independence.

   For many daughters, one formal marker of the transition to adulthood is her move from college to career. Searching for and successfully obtaining a job is a necessary but oftentimes challenging undertaking for graduating seniors. Research has shown that emotional distress frequently accompanies the job hunt but that the presence of social support can ease this distress and facilitate positive personal and job outcomes. Mothers, in particular, appear to fill an important support role during this time, helping emerging adults to make decisions and adapt more easily to change. There is much more to be learned about how daughters and mothers seek and communicate support during this time and whether what we have come to expect of the support process is also applicable within this unique, complex transition. As such, the following research questions will be explored: (1) What are the stressors faced by emerging adult daughters transitioning from college to career? (2) What are emerging adult daughters' experiences with supportive communication during the transition from college to career? (3) What features of support communicated from mothers to daughters during this time are perceived as helpful? (4) How do emerging adult daughters' experiences with supportive communication relate to their ability to cope with stressors present during the transition from college to career?

   In sum, the current study seeks to understand a key phase in a young woman's life, during which two key things are happening: (a) she is dealing with the challenging goals of finding a job and beginning a career – events which, for most people, involve opportunities for social support; (b) she is also experiencing a shift in her relationship with her mother, a relationship which may be a key source of support and potentially central to her identity as a woman. Daughters need support during this time, but are their mothers able to provide appropriate and helpful support given the fact that both parties are renegotiating and recalibrating their relationship (as this otherwise stressful transition is taking place)? It is with the concurrence of these two events, and the ways in which the support-giving process must also be adapted in order to be successful, that the current study is concerned.

4. **Procedures**

The current study employs a qualitative, phenomenological approach. In order to analyze daughters' experience of support receipt and coping during the transition from college to career, the use of in-depth interviews is helpful in gaining a more phenomenological understanding of individuals' perceptions of their situation, resources, and coping mechanisms. Following the completion of a short demographic survey, participants will answer questions in a semi-structured interview format. Sample questions are attached. Follow-up questions will also be used to further explore topics that participants introduce. Interviews will take, on average, 45-90 minutes. Transcribed interview data will be coded and analyzed thematically.

a. **Location**
Interviews will take place in a location determined by the participant, such as a local coffee shop or restaurant, the local library, the participant's home, the co-investigator's campus office, etc. If a participant cannot meet in person, the interview will take place via videoconference.

b. **Resources**
Space for this study will be provided by the participant or by the co-investigator, or a public location will be chosen by the participant. Audio equipment and transcription costs will be provided at the cost of the co-investigator. Study compensation will be provided at the cost of the co-investigator.

c. **Study Timeline**
Human subject involvement will begin, contingent upon study approval, in August 2017. Participation in the study may continue through September 2017. Data analysis will take place through December 2017. This study is being used as the basis of the co-investigator's doctoral dissertation which will be defended no later than May 2018.

5. **Measures**

Demographic survey questions and interview questions have been designed specifically for this project. Interview protocol for this study includes a semi-structured interview guide which will be followed generally; however, the researchers will follow the participants' lead during the conversation, and may deviate from the guide depending on what participants want to discuss. The participant profile and interview guide are attached.

6. **Participants**

a. **Target Population**
The target population for the current study is emerging adult daughters, ages 18-25, in the process of transitioning from college to career. Participants must be within one year of graduating, or one year of having graduated, from any four-year college or university. The anticipated sample size is 30-50 participants.

b. **Inclusion/Exclusion**

Participants must be female. They must be within the ages of 18 and 25, therefore considered an "emerging adult." They must within one year of graduating, or within one year of having graduated, from a four-year college or university. They must have a living mother/mother-figure with whom they are on speaking terms. They must be willing to discuss their transition from college to career and their relationship with their mother/mother-figure. They must be willing to sign a consent form to participate.

c. **Benefits**

There is no direct benefit to the participant. Society may benefit as a result of this research; data analysis will attempt to reveal behaviors which can improve daughters' coping and mother-daughter communication during this specific life transition.

d. **Risks**

There are no physical risks to participation in this study. Potential risks exist for psychological distress as a result of discussing relationship dynamics or history, but this risk is minimal due to the nature of the study. To prevent unanticipated problems, participants will be thoroughly informed as to the nature of the interview before consenting to participate. Although no more than everyday stress levels are anticipated in talking about mother-daughter communication, discussing intimate matters has the possibility of provoking strong emotions; as such, participants may decline to answer any questions or withdraw from participation at any time. Participants will be given the phone number of a counseling service that offers free and income-based-fee counseling if they need support. Psychological treatment will not be provided by the researcher. Unanticipated problems will be reported to the IRB at The University of Texas at Austin.

e. **Recruitment**

Recruitment for the study will utilize social media and email channels to solicit a convenient sample of participants. Recruitment text is attached.

f. **Obtaining Informed Consent**

Prior to the start of the interview, the co-investigator will review the consent form with each participant. Participants will sign 2 copies of the consent form; one copy is for the co-investigator and one copy is for the participant's records. For interviews being conducted via videoconference, I request a waiver of documentation of informed consent. In the case of videoconference interviews, participants will provide verbal consent. Participants who choose not to sign the consent form will not continue in the study.

7. **Privacy and Confidentiality**

Interviews will take place at a quiet location of the participant's choice, such as a coffee shop or restaurant, the local library, the participant's home, or the co-investigator's office. Interviews will be private, one-on-one, face-to-face (in person or videoconference) interactions. Maximum effort will be employed to ensure participants' comfort and ease. Participant confidentiality will be maintained by changing all names, locations, and any other identifying information. Contact information (real name, phone number, address, and email address) will be collected for those wishing to receive a gift card and/or be entered into a drawing for their participation; this information will not be disclosed to anyone other than the principal investigator and co-investigator.

Confidentiality of the Data or Samples

a. Interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed. If participants do not wish to be audio recorded, the interviewer will take hand-written notes during the conversation instead.
b. Audio recordings will be labeled by participant pseudonym and interview date. Audio files and transcription files will be stored on a secure, password-protected data storage website, accessible to the principal investigator and co-investigator. Hard copy participant data including consent forms, demographic profiles, and the pseudonym key file will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the private, locked office of the co-investigator, separate from recorded conversations and notes. No one other than the principal investigator and co-investigator will see the identifying information of participants.
c. Audio recordings and transcriptions (all de-identified) will be kept indefinitely, for use in future studies, stored on a secure, password-protected data storage website. Hard copy participant data (signed consent forms and demographic info forms) will be kept for three years following the completion of the study, at which point they will be destroyed.
d. All audio data will be labeled with a pseudonym only. Audio data will be transcribed to written data. A professional, confidential transcription service will be used for this task. The transcriptionist will not have access to participants' identifying information other than that which is revealed in the audio file. The audio file will be shared with the transcription service over the internet using a temporary, secure storage link which expires within days. Though the transcriptionist will have the audio file downloaded, authorization to the audio file link will expire, disallowing repeat downloads.
e. Original audio files (on the recording device) will be erased once the audio data is successful uploaded to the secure online site. Participant data (consent forms and demographic profiles) will be destroyed three years after the completion of the study.

8. **Compensation**

Participants will receive a $15 gift card to Target for their participation. They will also be entered into a drawing to win one $100 Target gift card.

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SUPPORT

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

P.O. Box 7426, Austin, Texas 78713 · Mail Code A3200
(512) 471-8871 · FAX (512) 471-8873

FWA # 00002030

Date: 08/14/17

PI: Erin Eileen Donovan

Dept: Communication Studies

Title: A Qualitative Exploration of Daughters' Reports of Supportive and Unsupportive Responses from their Mother during the Transition from College to Career

Re: IRB Expedited Approval for Protocol Number 2017-06-0029

Dear Erin Eileen Donovan:

In accordance with the Federal Regulations the Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed the above referenced research study and found it met the requirements for approval under the Expedited category noted below for the following period of time: 08/11/2017 to 08/10/2018 . *Expires 12 a.m. [midnight] of this date.* If the research will be conducted at more than one site, you may initiate research at any site from which you have a letter granting you permission to conduct the research. You should retain a copy of the letter in your files.

Expedited category of approval:

☐ 1) Clinical studies of drugs and medical devices only when condition (a) or (b) is met. (a) Research on drugs for which an investigational new drug application (21 CFR Part 312) is not required. (Note: Research on marketed drugs that significantly increases the risks or decreases the acceptability of the risks associated with the use of the product is not eligible for expedited review). (b) Research on medical devices for which (i) an investigational device exemption application (21 CFR Part 812) is not required; or (ii) the medical device is cleared/approved for marketing and the medical device is being used in accordance with its cleared/approved labeling.

☐ 2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture as follows: (a) from healthy, non-pregnant adults who weigh at least 110 pounds. For these subjects, the amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week; or (b) from other adults and children2, considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

☐ 3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by non-invasive means. Examples:
(a) Hair and nail clippings in a non-disfiguring manner.

(b) Deciduous teeth at time of exfoliation or if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction;
(c) Permanent teeth if routine patient care indicates a need for extraction.
(d) Excreta and external secretions (including sweat).
(e) Uncannulated saliva collected either in an un-stimulated fashion or stimulated by chewing gumbase or wax or by applying a dilute citric solution to the tongue.
(f) Placenta removed at delivery.
(g) Amniotic fluid obtained at the time of rupture of the membrane prior to or during labor.
(h) Supra- and subgingival dental plaque and calculus, provided the collection procedure is not more invasive than routine prophylactic scaling of the teeth and the process is accomplished in accordance with accepted prophylactic techniques.
(i) Mucosal and skin cells collected by buccal scraping or swab, skin swab, or mouth washings.
(j) Sputum collected after saline mist nebulization.

☐ 4) Collection of data through non-invasive procedures (not involving general anesthesia or sedation) routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves. Where medical devices are employed, they must be cleared/approved for marketing. (Studies intended to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the medical device are not generally eligible for expedited review, including studies of cleared medical devices for new indications).
Examples:
(a) Physical sensors that are applied either to the surface of the body or at a distance and do not involve input of significant amounts of energy into the subject or an invasion of the subject's privacy.
(b) Weighing or testing sensory acuity.
(c) Magnetic resonance imaging.
(d) Electrocardiography, electroencephalography, thermography, detection of naturally occurring radioactivity, electroretinography, ultrasound, diagnostic infrared imaging, doppler blood flow, and echocardiography.
(e) Moderate exercise, muscular strength testing, body composition assessment, and flexibility testing where appropriate given the age, weight, and health of the individual.

☐ 5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis).
Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(4). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.

☒ 6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes.

☒ 7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.
Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b)(3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.

☒ Use the attached approved informed consent document(s).

☒ You have been granted a Waiver of Documentation of Consent according to 45 CFR 46.117 and/or 21 CFR 56.109(c)(1).

☐ You have been granted a Waiver of Informed Consent according to 45 CFR 46.116(d).

Responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Report immediately to the IRB any unanticipated problems.
2. Submit for review and approval by the IRB all modifications to the protocol or consent form(s). Ensure the proposed changes in the approved research are not applied without prior IRB review and approval, except when necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject. Changes in approved research implemented without IRB review and approval initiated to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subject must be promptly reported to the IRB, and will be reviewed under the unanticipated problems policy to determine whether the change was consistent with ensuring the subjects continued welfare.
3. Report any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of subjects to continue to participate.
4. Ensure that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
5. Use only a currently approved consent form, if applicable.
   Note: Approval periods are for 12 months or less.
6. Protect the confidentiality of all persons and personally identifiable data, and train your staff and collaborators on policies and procedures for ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of subjects and their information.
7. Submit a Continuing Review Application for continuing review by the IRB. Federal regulations require IRB review of on-going projects no less than once a year a reminder letter will be sent to you two months before your expiration date. If a reminder is not received from Office of Research Support (ORS) about your upcoming continuing review, it is still the primary responsibility of the Principal Investigator not to conduct research activities on or after the expiration date. The Continuing Review Application must be submitted, reviewed and approved, before the expiration date.
8. Upon completion of the research study, a Closure Report must be submitted to the ORS.
9. Include the IRB study number on all future correspondence relating to this protocol.

If you have any questions contact the ORS by phone at (512) 471-8871 or via e-mail at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Sincerely,

James P. Wilson

James Wilson, Ph.D.
Institutional Review Board Chair

Appendix B: Consent Form

IRB USE ONLY
Study Number: 2017-06-0029
Approval Date: 8/11/2017
Expires: 8/10/2018

Consent for Participation in Research

Title: *A Qualitative Exploration of Daughter's Reports of Supportive and Unsupportive Responses from their Mother during the Transition from College to Career*

Introduction
The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. The person performing the research will answer any of your questions. Read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to take part. If you decide to be involved in this study, this form will be used to record your consent.

Purpose of the Study
You have been asked to participate in a research study about mother-daughter communication. The purpose of this study is to better understand how daughters are impacted by the type of support they receive from their mother during the transition from college to career.

What will you be asked to do?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete a brief survey and a one-on-one interview. This study will take up to 90 minutes and will include approximately 40 study participants. You participation will be audio recorded.

What are the risks involved in this study?
There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this study. Although no more than everyday stress levels are anticipated in talking about mother-daughter communication, talking about intimate matters has the potential to provoke strong emotions. Participants may decline to answer any question or withdraw from participation at any time.

What are the possible benefits of this study?
You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your information will advance the science of understanding mother-daughter communication with the ultimate goal of improving these interactions.

Do you have to participate?
No, your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate at all or, if you start the study, you may withdraw at any time. Withdrawal or refusing to participate will not affect your relationship with The University of Texas at Austin or with the researcher in anyway.

If you would like to participate, please sign the attached consent form. You will receive a copy of this form.

What are the alternatives to participating in this research?
If you do not want to participate, you can help recruit other participants as an aid to this study.

Will there be any compensation?
You will receive a one-time $15 gift card to Target at the conclusion of your interview. You will also be entered into a one-time drawing for a chance to win a $100 gift card to Target. You will be responsible for any taxes assessed on the compensation.

How will your privacy and confidentiality be protected if you participate in this research study?
Your privacy and the confidentiality of your data will be protected through the changing of all names and identifying information in the audio recordings and reports. Audio data will be labeled with a pseudonym. No one other than Jane Damron will be viewing the identifying information of each participant. All identifying information will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in a private, locked office. No identifying or contact information will be kept with the data at any time. The data resulting from your participation may be used for future research or be made available to other researchers for research purposes not detailed within this consent form.

If it becomes necessary for the Institutional Review Board to review the study records, information that can be linked to you will be protected to the extent permitted by law. Your research records will not be released without your consent unless required by law or a court order. The data resulting from your participation may be made available to other researchers in the future for research purposes not detailed within this consent form. In these cases, the data will contain no identifying information that could associate it with you, or with your participation in any study.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only the research team will have access to the recordings. Recordings will be kept for indefinitely.

Whom to contact with questions about the study?
Prior, during or after your participation you can contact the researcher Jane Damron at 956-371-4945 or send an email to utjanedamron@gmail.com for any questions or if you feel that you have been harmed. This study has been reviewed and approved by The University Institutional Review Board and the study number is 2017-06-0029.

Whom to contact with questions concerning your rights as a research participant?
For questions about your rights or any dissatisfaction with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board by phone at (512) 471-8871 or email at orsc@uts.cc.utexas.edu.

Participation
If you agree to participate, please return this signed document at the time of the interview.

Signature
You have been informed about this study's purpose, procedures, possible benefits and risks, and you have received a copy of this form. You have been given the opportunity to ask questions before you sign, and you have been told that you can ask other questions at any time. You voluntarily agree to participate in this study. By signing this form, you are not waiving any of your legal rights.

_____
Printed Name

_____ _____
Signature Date

As a representative of this study, I have explained the purpose, procedures, benefits, and the risks involved in this research study.

_____
Print Name of Person obtaining consent

Signature of Person obtaining consent

Date

Appendix C: Participant Profile

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone number: _____

Email Address: _____

Age: _____

Are you currently in college? If yes, what is your year and major?

_____

If in college, what are your plans following college?

_____

What methods are you currently utilizing to find a job?

_____

Have you graduated college? If yes, what are you currently doing?

_____

If graduated and employed, how long did it take you to find your job?

_____

If graduated and unemployed, how long have you been searching for work?

_____

Marital status (circle all that apply):

Single Married Divorced Widowed Separated

Current city/state of residence: _____

Where are you from? (Any area/city/state you claim) _____

Race/ethnicity: _____

Mother/Mother Figure's Name: _____

Mother's age: _____

Mother's highest level of education completed: _____

Mother's occupation: _____

Mother's marital status (circle all that apply):

Single Married Divorced Widowed Separated

How many children does your mother have? (Provide the name and age of each)

_____

Mother's current city/state of residence: _____

Where is your mother from? (any area/city/state she claims) _____

Mother's race/ethnicity: _____

All things considered, how satisfied or dissatisfied have you been with your relationship with your mother? Circle the number that best describes how satisfied you are.

Completely satisfied Neutral Completely unsatisfied

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Appendix D: Interview Guide

Thank you for your participation. As indicated in the consent form, I'm conducting research on young women's experience of supportive communication from their mothers during their transition from college to career. I'm interested in learning about your experiences, so there are no right or wrong answers to any of the questions we'll discuss today. If there are questions in the interview that you'd rather not answer, just let me know. If you have any questions for me, feel free to ask them at any time.

For our purposes today, please free to talk about your mother (biological, adopted, etc.) or mother-figure (grandparent, stepmother, guardian, mentor, etc.).

1. You're currently [a senior in college] or [a recent grad]. What has that experience been like for you?
    a. How would you describe the transition from college to career, to someone who hasn't done it yet? What sorts of changes are involved?
    b. What is the hardest thing about thinking about and/or preparing for post-grad life?
    c. What are specific things that concern you or stress you out about this process?
        i. How does that stress manifest? How do you deal with it? What seem to be the most/least helpful ways of dealing with the stress that surrounds this period of life?
    d. What things relating to this process are you excited about?
2. Tell me a little bit about your relationship with your mom.

a. What is your relationship like? How would you describe your feelings toward her and/or your relationship with her at this point in your life?
    i. How satisfied with the relationship are you?
b. What are your normal patterns of communication with each other?
    i. How often do you usually talk, and for how long?
    ii. Who typically initiates communication?
    iii. What channels/mediums of communication are most frequently used (face-to-face, phone, text, other)?
    iv. What sorts of things do you communicate about on a regular basis?

3. Is the transition from college to career, the job search, etc., something that you talk with your mom about? How do you talk to your mom about the job search and/or transition process?
    a. If so, how do these conversations start? What sorts of channels are most commonly used during these conversations (face to face, phone, text, etc.)? What sorts of things do you and your mom discuss within them? How do these sorts of conversations end?
    b. Are there things about the transition from college to career that you specifically avoid talking about with your mom?
        i. If so, sorts of topics/details do you tend to avoid?
        ii. Why do you prefer to avoid them?
    c. Can you describe one of the best conversations you've had with your mom about this topic?
        i. What do you think made the conversation a good one?

d. Can you describe a difficult, unsatisfying, hurtful, or unhelpful conversation you've had with your mom about this topic?
    i. What do you think made the conversation a difficult one? What in particular was hurtful? What in particular was unhelpful?
    ii. If you could do that conversation over, what – if anything – would you do differently?
e. When do you feel the most supported by your mom in this area of your life?
f. Could you give me specific examples of things she says or does that are helpful and supportive?
g. When do you feel the least supported by your mom in this area of your life?
    i. Could you give me specific examples of things she says or does that are unhelpful, unsupportive, harmful, or hurtful?
h. What would you like your mom to do more or less of?
    i. If you were to give advice to other moms about how to be helpful, what would you say?
    ii. If you were to give advice to other moms about *what not to do*, what would you say?
    iii. If there was one thing you could say to your mom about this, what would it be?

4. How has your communication with your mom about this area of your life impacted how you are handling the process itself?
    a. How has it impacted how you approach the logistics of the transition?
    b. How has it impacted your stress levels
    c. How has it impacted how you cope with the stress?

    d. Has it impacted anything else?
5. How has your communication with your mom about *this* area of your life impacted your relationship with her? If at all, in what ways specifically?
6. Where *else* do you seek support (logistical, informational, emotional, etc.) for help with this process?
    a. How does your mom fit into the broader picture of all the support you're seeking and receiving?
        i. Who do you go to first? If not your mom, in what ways is this other source providing helpful support to you?
        ii. Do you go to your mom more or less frequently than you go to other sources? Why or why not?
        iii. Is mom better or worse at giving support than other sources? Why or why not?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you so much for your participation! Do you have any other questions for me?

Appendix E: Summary of Themes

	Theme	Sub-Theme	Description	Example
Stressors Experienced While Searching for a Job				
1	Facing the Unknown		Uncertainty surrounding the unknowns of the job search process and post-grad life.	"I don't know exactly how [post-grad life] works or how it functions. I don't exactly know what I should be prepared for. Even though I ask a lot of people and they tell me things, they're all different things. I don't exactly know who to believe or what's right and what's wrong, which is hard."
2	Navigating Decision-Making			
2a		An Abundance of Choices	Considering a wide array of potential paths.	"There are just so many choices. I'm at this point where I really don't have any tethers holding me down. I could go anywhere. I love that idea, but it's also overwhelming because I'm like, oh wow, I could go anywhere and do anything. That's a lot to consider."
2b		Making the Right Choice	Discerning the option with the best potential outcomes.	"Finding a job was a big stress. But then deciding if the job was good for me or not – I think that was the biggest stress. Finding the right job. Not just taking one to take one."
2c		Proximity Considerations	Deciding where to move/settle; choosing between familiarity and novelty.	"Location is a huge struggle for me. I want to apply for a bunch of different jobs in many locations, but my family is in Texas, my boyfriend is in California, my best friend is in California. So I'm applying for jobs there, but I don't want to make that "a thing." If I were to get a real opportunity, I would need to take it, [tearful] but it's so hard. I don't know what to do. It's just a struggle with my friends and family."
3	Worrying about Financial Independence		Concerns surrounding [in]ability to pay bills and	"One of my major things I think about is how I'm going to accomplish the mundane necessities, paying for everything.

			fully support oneself.	It’s been a very consistent thing that my parents are like, ‘As soon as you're out of college, that's it, you'll figure it out.’ And I get it, for sure, but that worries me. Our communication always reinforces that idea and it adds stress. What if I can't find a good job right away, what am I going to do? What if I have to work a menial job that won't pay the rent?”
4	Satisfying Expectations		Concerns surrounding [in]ability to pay bills and fully support oneself.	“There's so much pressure in the business school. A lot of people compete to be like, ‘Oh I have this awesome job lined up,’ or ‘I have the rest of my career figured out.’ I naturally compare myself to people, so there's a lot of pressure to have everything figured out. People think it’s not ok to go back and live with your parents for a little bit. I think it's a mixture of figuring out what I am okay with and what I want to do, versus the pressure of society.”
Stressors Experienced While Starting a Job				
5	Adjusting to New Pace of Life		Settling into a new schedule, with increased work hours and a different routine.	“It's definitely a culture shock. It’s more intensive, the days are a lot longer, and you don't get nap time between classes like you used to. There’s more responsibility and more pressure. Not pressure to do your homework or write papers or study for tests, but there's this intensity of, “Oh, now there's this deadline! Oh, now it’s the end of the quarter! Oh, now there's this other big task!” It’s a total shift, and you can't even really explain it until you've transitioned into that. Even girls who are older who I get advice from would be like, ‘There's really nothing you can do to prepare for it except just being flexible and being organized.’ I had no idea it would be this involved.”
6	Feeling Isolated		The challenge of maintaining and/or making friends and	“The emotional toll of the transition was the hardest for me. I had to move locations, so there was the toll of having to move

			establishing a new sense of community.	cross-country. And then the social aspect of transitioning out of college is also pretty rough because there's no longer forced social interaction. You're not always living with someone or around people in classes or studying. It was actually quite a transition to learn how to reach out to people if I wanted social interaction, and to keep in touch with old friends too. Moving locations and then navigating friendships and social life after that – those were the main things that were emotional and stressful."
Ineffective Forms of Communication (And Outcomes)				
7	Undermining Daughters' Autonomy		Mothers communicating in ways which subtly or explicitly challenge their daughters' independence.	"She means well but sometimes I'm like, 'Okay a little less of the helpfulness.' She can get so psyched about something that, instead of me holding reigns and her sitting next to me, she'll start to take the reins. Sometimes, even though she's super excited and she's super happy, she can be a little overbearing and take a little bit away from me. She doesn't mean any of that in a bad way, but it's sometimes like 'Ok, dial it down a bit.'"
8	Preeminence of Mothers' Ideas		Mothers stating or implying that their ideas are best and/or should be	"She can be relentless in her pursuit of rightness. She has to be 100% right. I feel the least supported when I come up with an idea about how I will approach post-grad life, and she's like, 'No I don't think that's right.' She doesn't have a reason for it. She just tells me that she doesn't think it's right. It makes me feel lost and incapable of making my own decisions."
9	Unhelpful Patterns of Listening		Mothers' lack of visible attentiveness and investment during conversation.	"I can tell when she's thinking of other things. So when I'm trying to have a serious conversation with her and her body is turned away or her eyes are in a different place, stuff like that. She's also very addicted to Facebook. So at the dinner table sometimes she'll just be on her phone, and I'll be like,

				“Hey mom, can we talk about this?” And she'll be like, “Yeah, honey,” but she doesn’t get off the phone. Eventually I'm like, “Mom, you need to put that thing down.” Sometimes she just doesn’t get it, because her mind is in so many different places. That's frustrating for me, and that will make me be like, ‘Ok, this conversation's going to happen at a different time.’ We just kind of move on.”
10	Unhelpful Patterns of Questioning			
10a		More Questions Than Desired	Excessive, repetitive, premature, or annoying questions from mother.	“She's always curious and I take it as nosy. She always has asked a lot of questions. Sometimes it's just like, “Is your boss nice? Do you like your job? Do you want to stay in it? Is this what you want to do?” And I just don't have the answer for it yet. I think she needs to be a little bit more patient when it comes to my job. It'll just stress me out more if you ask me.”
10b		Fewer Questions Than Desired	Minimal questions from mother, implying lack of interest or involvement.	“When I said, ‘Hey, I want to apply for this Content Strategist position,’ she was like, ‘I don’t know what that is.’ She doesn't really ask questions when I wish she would, and that's been a struggle for our relationship. Not that she doesn't care to know, she just has other things that she's worried about. And she knows that I'll be successful and do well so she's like, ‘Ok, cool, whatever, that's great.’ If she really wants to know something, she'll ask. But when it comes to jobs, that's just not something that she asks about. I would like my mom to talk more and ask more questions.”
11	Outcome: Increased Stress		Unsatisfying communication with mothers leads to greater stress in daughters.	“She, more so than me, has to have a plan, needs the structure, needs to know what's going to happen. So I think if she were to know more details about how all over the place I am right now, she'd be like, “Oh my gosh, you need to figure

				out what you're doing." And it would open the door for her to be like, "This is what you need to do. Stop thinking about all those other things. Here's the plan," which just adds so much pressure to all the other things I'm trying to figure out right now."
12	Outcome: Daughters Controlling Information			
12a		Avoiding Mothers' Worry and Involvement	Daughters withhold information from mothers to prevent stress for both parties.	"I used to tell her when I had deadlines, but I've kind of strayed away from letting her know when I have big exams because she'll be worried. It sounds bad, but I don't want her to be worried because that will make me worry if she's worried. So, for my own good, I've just kind of backed off. If she does ask me when the next test or paper is, I'll let her know. But I try not to. It's just easier."
12b		Waiting Until Things are Settled	Daughters withhold information from mothers until details have been finalized.	"There's a lot that I don't talk to my mom about. The stuff that I know and that I've planned out, I will definitely talk to her about. When I registered for classes for my last semester, I was immediately ok talking to her about that because it was figured out. It was planned. But the stuff that I'm unsure of – like what I'm doing in May – I don't talk about and I hope that she won't bring it up."
Effective Forms of Communication (And Outcomes)				
13	Encouraging Daughters' Autonomy		Mothers act in ways that acknowledge and empower daughters' independence.	"I've definitely seen a change in her trusting me with finances and family secrets since I'm graduating and becoming an adult. She's put more responsibility on me, and I feel like she is starting to look at me like, 'Okay she's an adult now, she can handle this.' I've appreciated that. I feel like the transition has brought us closer because she trusts me with more now. I feel like she's saying, 'My daughter is an adult, and I can talk

				to her about the serious stuff. I don't have to pay her bills anymore. She's got this.'"
14	Mother as a Confident Cheerleader			
14a		"I'm Excited for You"	Mothers communicate their excitement about their daughters' opportunities.	"When I got the call that I received my job, my mom couldn't even think! She was at her job and she had to go into another room because she was so happy she started shouting! She started crying, 'Oh, your sister, call her! Call everybody!' She was crying because she was so happy. She's really excited when things like this happen. Her words of affirmation through a phone call and actually hearing the excitement in her voice gets me excited and makes me feel confident. She always says, 'I'm proud of you, I'm proud of you, I'm proud of you.'"
14b		"I Have Faith in You"	Mothers communicate their belief that daughters will be ok no matter what.	"It doesn't matter what I'm doing. It doesn't matter where I am. She is like, 'I know you are a smart girl. You are wise beyond your years. So I'm going to respect you by allowing you to make these decisions with me be behind you at full force.' She's always been consistent in that aspect. It doesn't matter what I'm doing. She's always supporting me, even if I'm doubting myself. She reminds me what I've done, where I'm going, who I am."
15	Helpful Patterns of Listening		Mothers showcase active, open-minded listening, signaling care, trust, and investment.	"When I'm expressing my thoughts and I see her fully turn her body to me and look at me and just truly listen to what I'm saying, that's big. If I can tell she's fully engaged in what I'm saying and gives me the time to finish my thoughts and get out everything I'm trying to say, that's exactly what I need. Sometimes she will try to interrupt and get her feelings and thoughts out, but when she just waits and lets me talk and listens to me, that

				would be a successful conversation."
16	Helpful Patterns of Questioning			
16a		Affirming Questions	Mothers ask questions which show care and interest.	"I like when she asks me how my job is going or asks me details about it. It makes me feel like she cares a lot and genuinely wants to know how I'm doing. When she asks more specific questions, it makes me feel like she's not just asking to ask. She genuinely wants to know answers and wants to know how I'm going."
16b		Process-Oriented Questions	Mothers ask questions which help daughters to explore their feelings and courses of action.	"I ask her for advice and she has me talk through it which helps me make a decision. She doesn't say, "Well this is what I think you should do." It's more having me talk through it and coming to a conclusion myself, rather than her making a decision for me."
17	Outcome: Decreased Stress		Satisfying communication with mothers helps daughters to better cope with stress.	"Talking to her really helps with the stress I'm under. At this specific time in my life, talking with her helps alleviate a lot of the stress because she can give me veteran's wisdom. 'Well when I was your age, I went this route.' We definitely have very different lifestyles from when she was my age, but she still has really great input. She knows when to ask questions. She knows what I need to look out for that I might not be used to seeing beforehand. The long-term view really helps with the stress, and helps make a decision easier."
18	Outcome: Increased Confidence and Efficacy		Satisfying communication with mothers helps daughters feel more capable.	"The way she speaks to me about these things has made me feel like I'm more in control than I original thought I was. In transitioning, I do feel like I have control. I can figure things out and make things work, and I feel like she helped me see that."

19	Outcome: Feeling Anchored		Satisfying communication with mothers promotes a sense of security in the face of change.	“If she wasn’t consistent, I feel like I would be more stressed. It would put a strain on me, and it wouldn't be a smooth transition. Because, at the end of the day, when you're transitioning from one milestone to another, you need a foundation and she's mine. Our relationship being solid has helped that transition.”

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